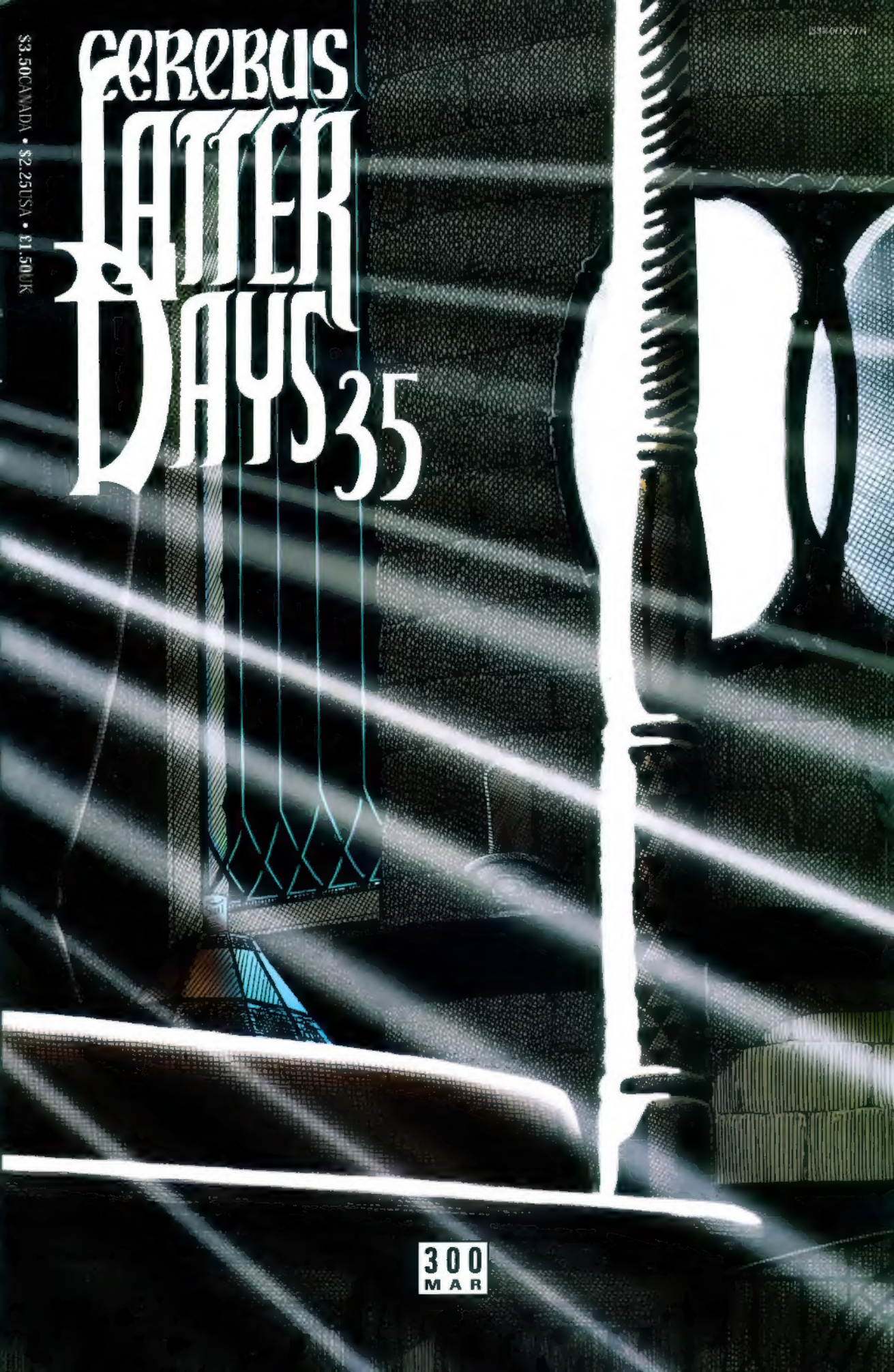
DCP

The New Standard

JPLAPPO


CEREBUS
LATTER DAYS 35
$3.50CANADA • $2.25USA • £1.50UK
300
MAR

Endings VIII

Printed on the inside back cover, you will find "Dave's Prayer" which began evolving back around 1998 when it occurred to me that if I was, indeed, "sold" on the existence of God, that maybe it was time to move on from just the one-sided discussion I had been having with Him for about two years to actual, you know, down-on-your-knees, eyes-closed, prayer. Morning and night to begin with. Originally, I started with the "I'm sorry's" and then moved on to the "thank You's" (I would maintain that all forms of prayer essentially break down into the two basic categories of "I'm sorry" and "thank You"). In between the two "If I am worthy of forgiveness in Your Eyes..." I originally had a much lengthier "I ask forgiveness of..." and there I would mention whatever it was I was doing (or had done since the last prayer) that I was pretty sure was wrong but which I wasn't prepared to give up at that point. Smoking and drinking were the big two. Excessive drinking was a different category. Fits of temper, masturbation, viewing pornography. It surprised me that God was pretty open-minded about anything I wanted "off the table" to start with. It didn't occur to me until much later that an omniscient Being has a pretty good idea of how to wean anyone off of anything, one step at a time as long as that anyone was willing to keep praying and keep making an effort. Not "drinking and praying" was a good place to start. Not "being hung over and praying" was a good next step. At that point you've got giant fist-sized holes in your drinking life, so it's really just a matter of chipping away at it at that point.

It took me a while to memorize the names of all the Jewish Prophets but it brought me full circle to a grade eleven classroom reading of *Inherit the Wind* where I was playing the William Jennings Bryan role (and, oddly enough—in those proto-feminist days—the girl who Jaka would later be based on was playing the Clarence Darrow role) and there comes the end-point where Darrow has demolished Bryan on the witness stand and Bryan is pounding himself on the leg and reciting the names of the Old Testament Prophets and, of course, I had to read them. And I remember thinking, I really should know these names. It would be a lot more effective if I could just recite them from memory. Well, it ended up taking thirty years, but I finally got here.

If you want to use the prayer, or parts of it, feel free. One of the things that I noticed, once I moved from reciting it twice a day to reciting it five times a day was what I would call "the helium effect." Right in the middle of the prayer, my voice would become strangulated and I could feel my larynx tightening. Sometimes to the point where my voice was barely audible. It would last for as long as twenty seconds at first. I would try clearing my throat to no effect—leading me to wonder, what if this persists all the way through the prayer and I keep talking like this? That never happened. I would just keep reciting my barely audible prayer and eventually something would suddenly "give" and my voice would suddenly drop back into its normal range. I suspect (but I certainly can't prove) that I was "passing" unclean spirits. I still do occasionally, but the effect lasts a lot shorter a time (two or three seconds now) and happens a lot less frequently. As I say, this happened pretty far along in the process, so don't expect it to happen overnight. The prayer takes about ten minutes to recite (less than an hour a day, in other words).

The parts in italics change over the course of the day from the hour-or-so-before-dawn prayer ("this morning") to the noon prayer ("this noon hour"), the afternoon prayer ("this afternoon"), the sunset prayer ("this evening") and the hour-or-so-after-sunset prayer ("this night").

I use the preamble as my "middle of the night" prayer whenever I wake up from a bad dream or have trouble getting back to sleep immediately. At least once a night is a good policy in my experience.

Keep the prayer handy. I think you're going to need it.

CEREBUS
NO. 300 MARCH 2004

DAVE SIM
Creator, Writer
Characters
(interior art & cover)
pencil & ink,
mechanical tones,
lettering

GERHARD
Background Artist
Cover Artist
pencil & ink

WAYNE KOPE
Cover Technician

LATTER DAYS

•

PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 266
and 267)

•

BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 268 to
288)

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 289 to
300)

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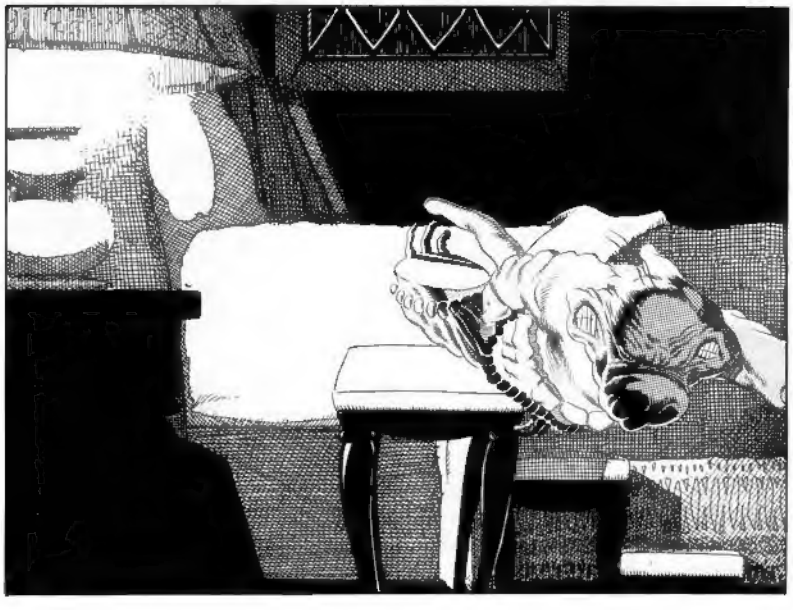
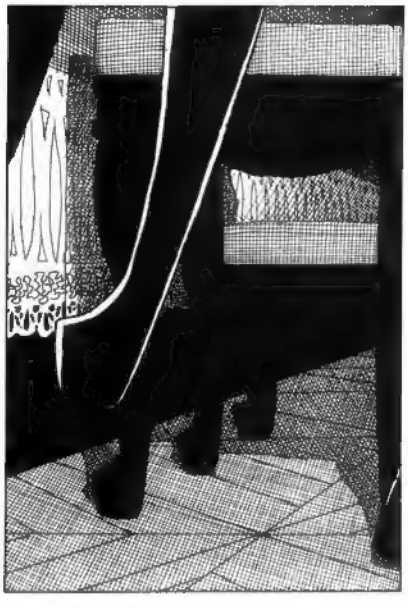
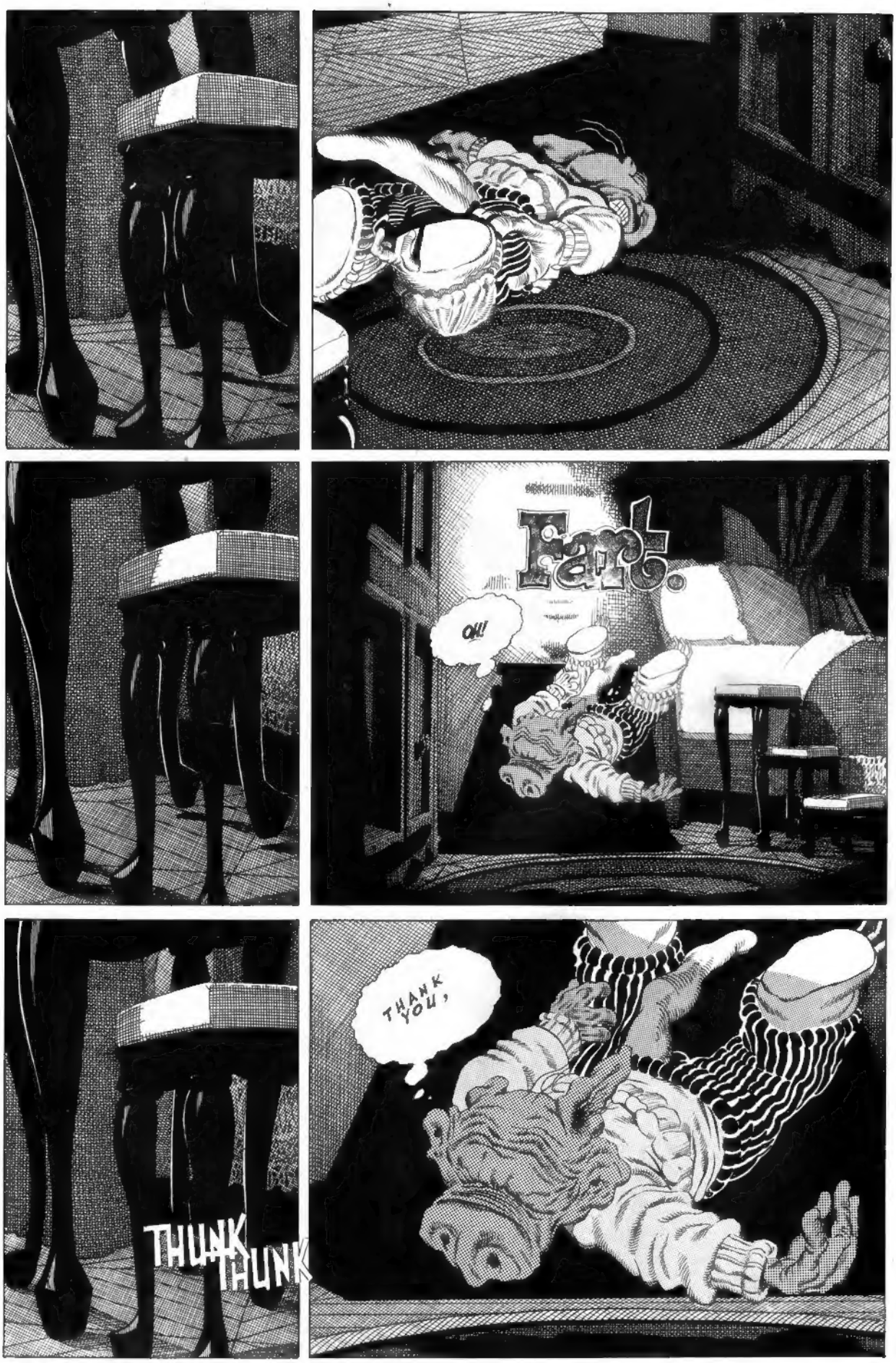
WINDSOR, ONTARIO

NAY.
CEREBUS WILL DISMEMBER THEM FIRST!
THEN CEREBUS WILL
TING
...OW...
...CEREBUS?...
...HAMSTRING...


Fart.
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THUNK
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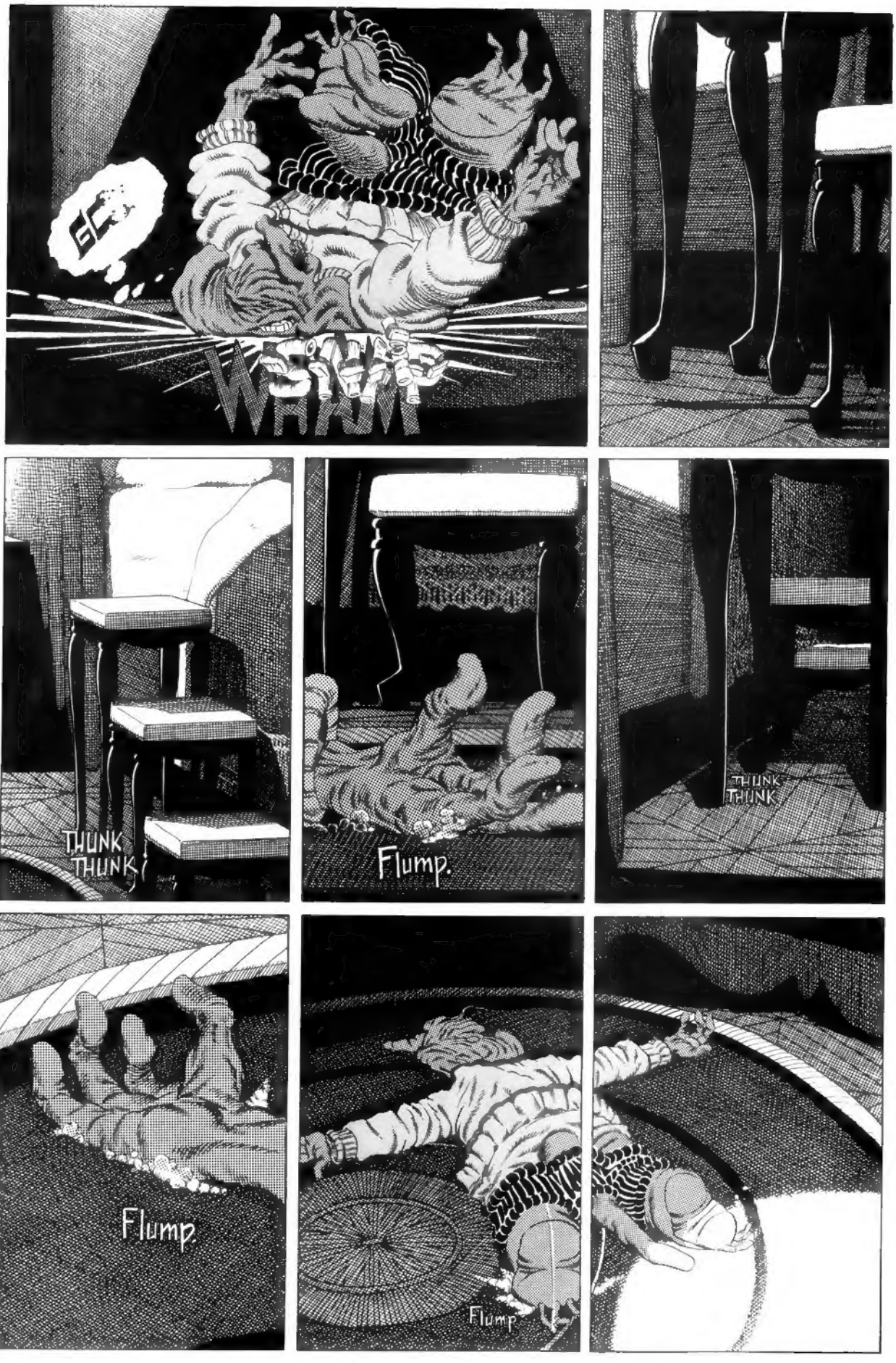
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THUNK
THUNK
Flump.
THUNK
THUNK
Flump.
Flump

?!
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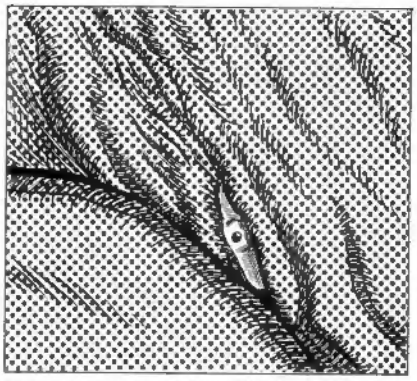
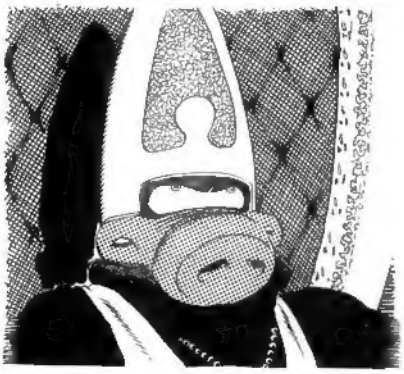
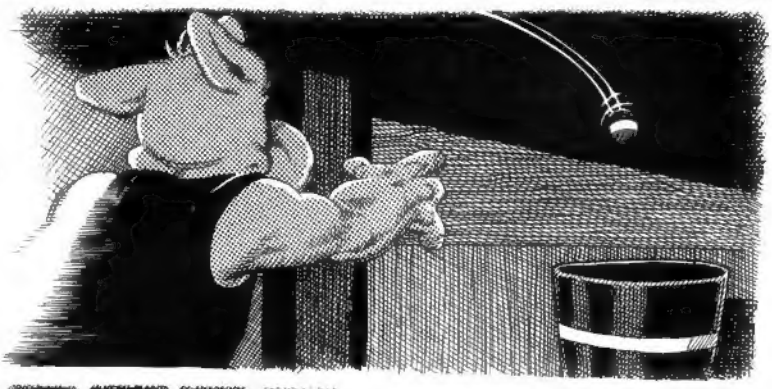
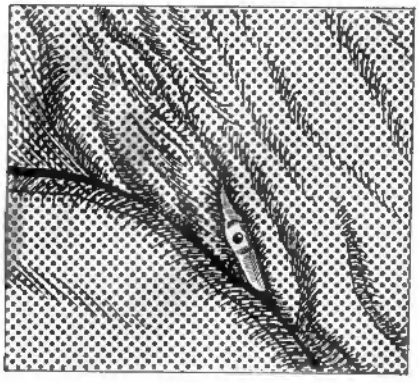
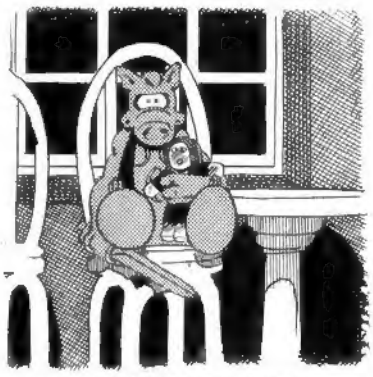
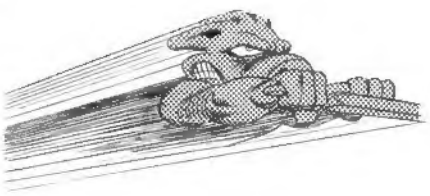
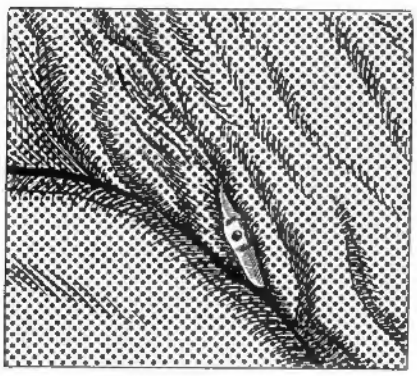
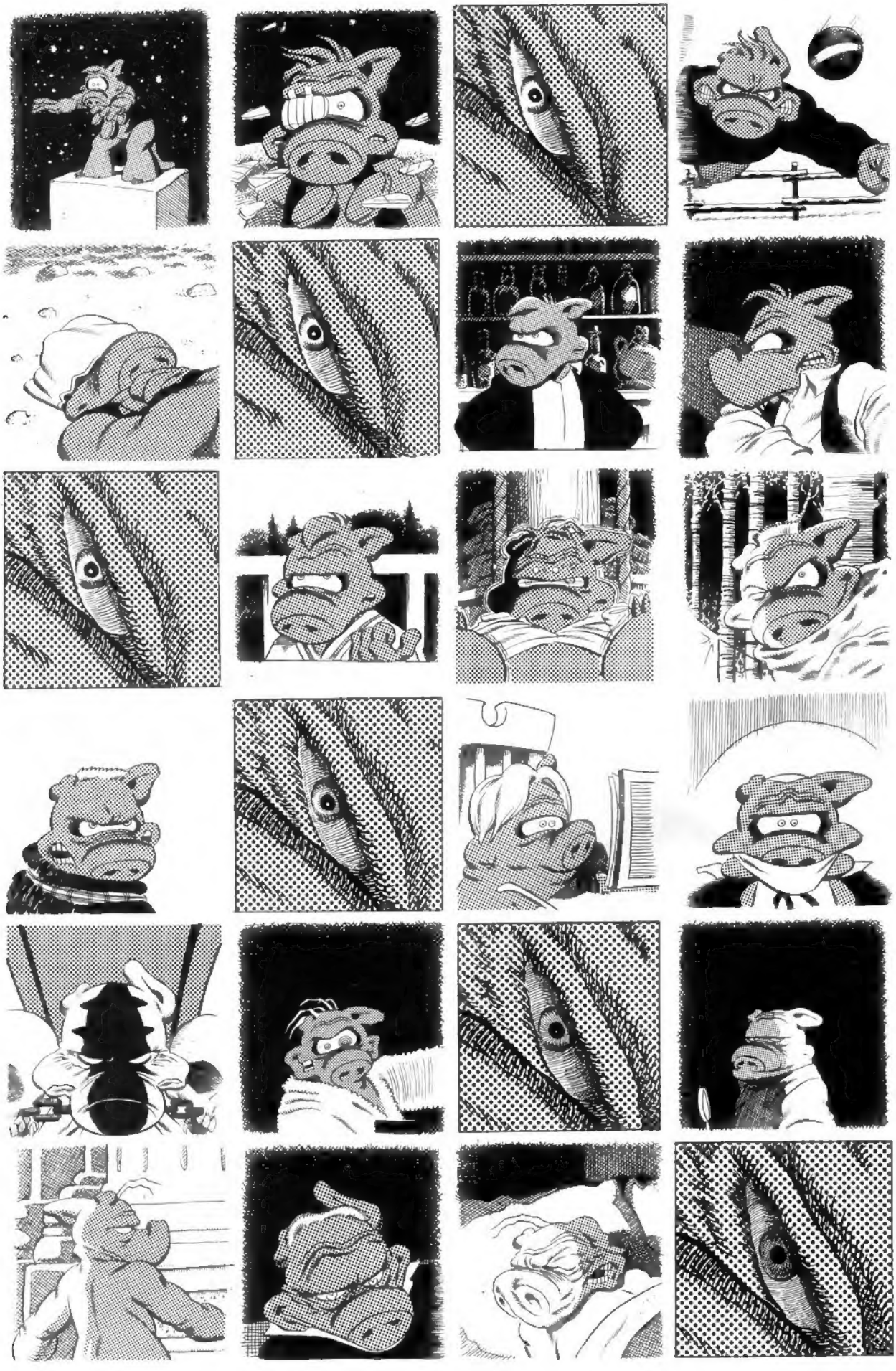
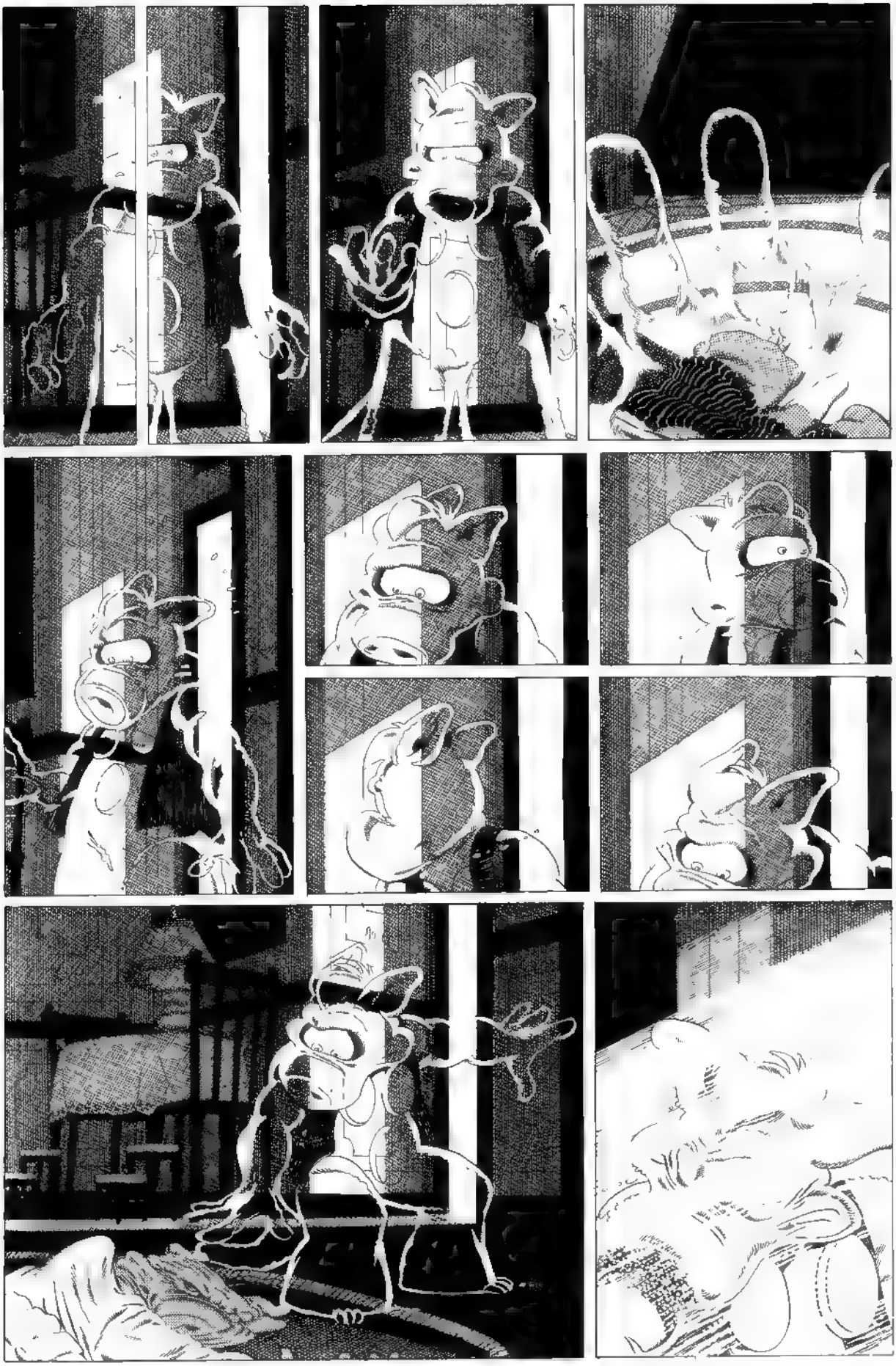
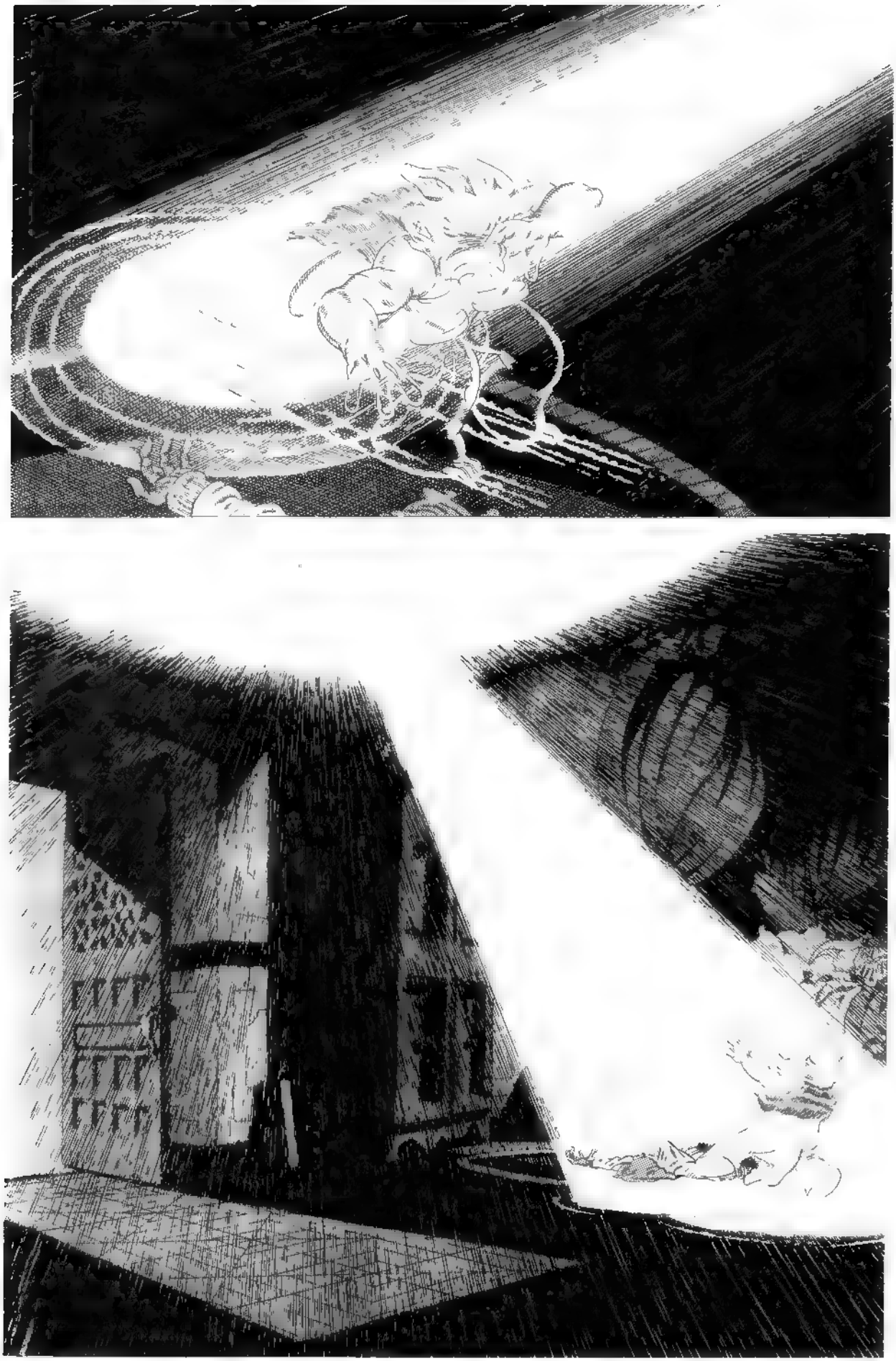
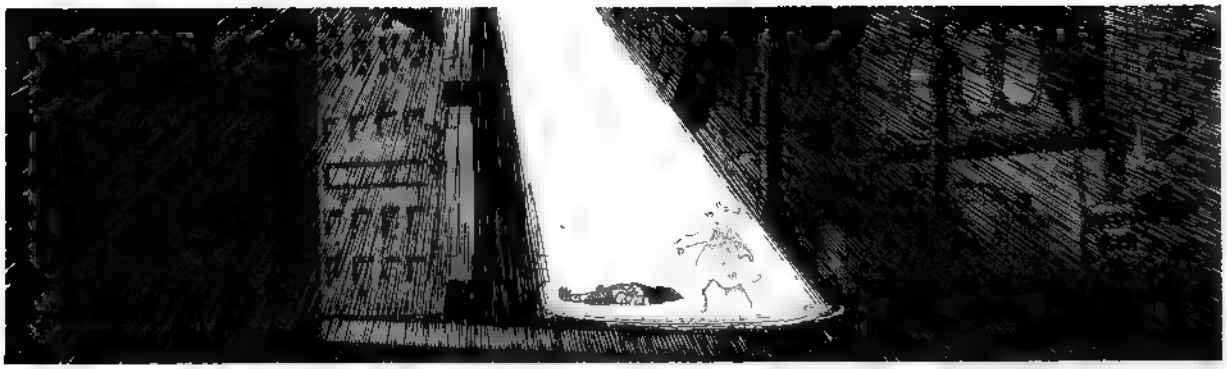












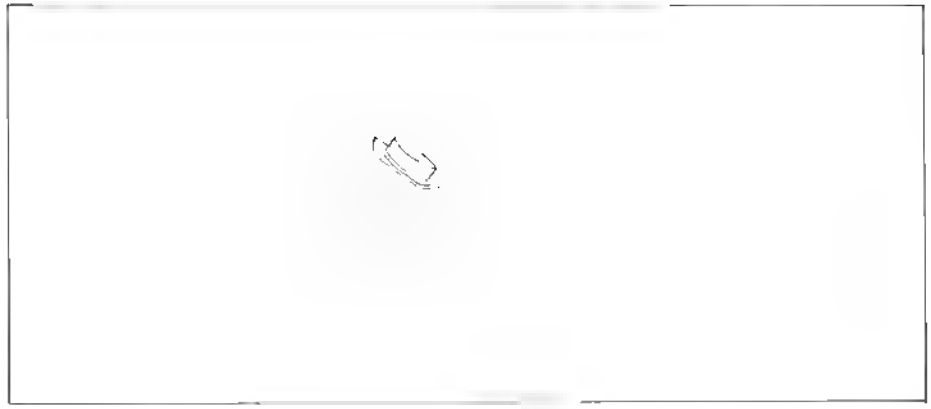


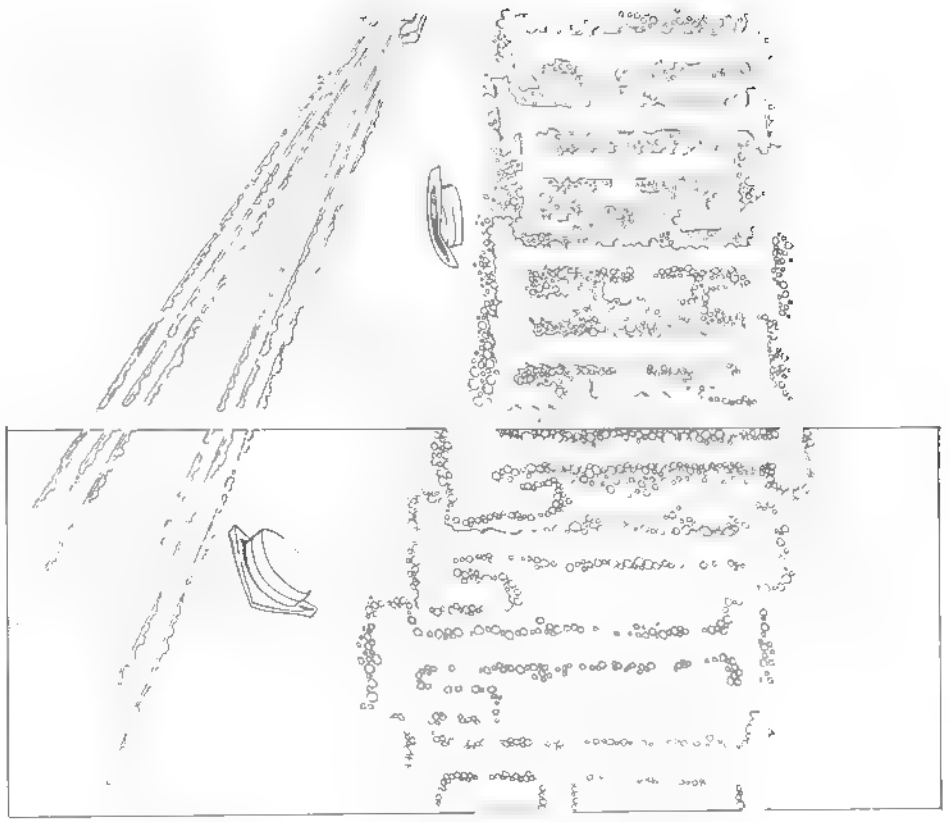
WAP
WAP
WAP
DOING
DOING
DOING
THOIT
STUFF
STUFF
WINK
RABH!
RABBI!

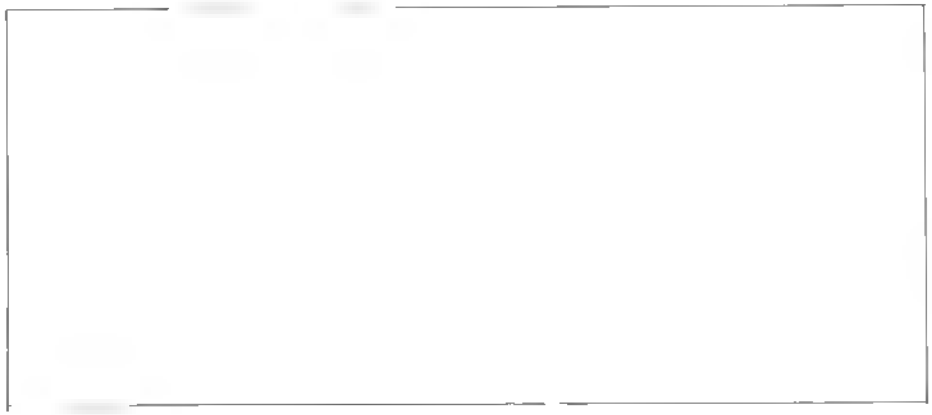
AWAAAAAY!
NO

ERT
ERT
ERT
ERT
ERT
(PANT)
GOD
(HELP)

HELP, GOD! THE LIGHT! THE LIGHT!
HELP, GOD! THE LIGHT HAS GOT CEREBUS!
TRIP
OOMPH
GOD!







"And if I have done well, and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired: but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attaine vnto. For as it is hurtfull to drinke wine, or water alone; & as wine mingled with water is pleasant and delighteth the taste: euen so speech finely framed, delighteth the eares of them that read the storie. And heere shall be an end."

II Maccabees 15:38-39

Aardvark Comment

David W. Johnson

"This excerpt is the first (I hope) in a series of one-a-week letters I'm going to send you, up until March-April, 2004. I admit in advance that I will, more than likely, spell words wrong, ramble on a lot, make hypothetical guesses and cover various things I've wanted to write to you for years. It's not my intention to try to get a letter printed or a cartoon printed (since I plan to send some of those, too). I only want to encourage you once a week, as you near the conclusion of Cerebus. *I know you probably don't need any encouragement, but I just think I should write to you. I don't know why, because I kept putting it off, and something kept urging me to write you. So, here it goes."*

That "something," I suspect, was God—or YHWH as David would have it—in the aftermath of my final break from my family concerned (perhaps?) that I should have some contact with someone (however remote) in the final year of *Cerebus*. Having completed the third last page of *Cerebus* last night, I finally went through my two foot-tall stacks of mail-to-be-answered (most of it from at least three years ago), pulling out all of the David W. Johnson pieces, each of them headed, "An Excerpt from David W. Johnson" This had been the first one, dated 4/13/03 and sent from 28 North Lancelot Ave. in Orlando, Florida (I'll always have an attachment to Orlando, since, when Ger and I stayed in Gainesville, Florida over the winter of '86, the *Orlando Sentinel* was the paper I read every morning at breakfast). David's spelling and punctuation leave a great deal to be desired, as he admits, but proved to be easily repaired (which I've done). The first letter was broken down into categories, "Dave Sim," "Self-Publishing," "Crossovers," "Diamond Distribution," and "Women". Subsequent sections, "Editorials/Letters" were dated 4/15 and 4/16. He elaborated in his P.S.:

"Part of the reason I'm writing you these letters & comic strips, and sending one a week is to commit to a schedule & show you how much I appreciated that you kept to a schedule over the years. I know lately it's become harder for you to write & draw as much as you used to. I want to encourage you You're almost there! Thank you. DJ 4/17".

Well, I didn't really expect that he would stick with it. It's one of the things you factor in with a marathon work like *Cerebus*, that there are going to be long, lonely stretches of road After the publicity attached to the twentieth anniversary, I knew that that would be it for the most part for the next six years and three months (I had guessed that the twenty-fifth anniversary, coming so close to the end, would be ignored and I guessed right). So, it was a very strange experience to suddenly have the promise of weekly "company" a year out from the finish line. "How about that?" I thought. The next letter came in dated 4/30—thus (technically, anyway) ending his "weekly" streak at "one in a row"—a four-pager this time, discussing "Literature" and "Spirits of Independence":

"Chicago, Illinois August 25-27, 1995. In the summer of '95, I had made a small fanzine called F.R.A.Y. *(Fellow Readers Against Yellow-Journalism). I only did 2 issues. In the first, I attacked the* Overstreet Price Guide *for many things. It's therefore best forgotten, I think. But, issue #2 I was very proud of. In between a color cover & back cover (8½ by 14" folded in half) with 16 computer-printed pages, I crammed in an article on Capt. Action figures by a collector* (*Jim Alexander, who also drew the cover w/Capt. Action, Ax-Taxi, & an atom bomb), an interview (Part 1) w/Todd Foxx (a local independent writer/artist from Evansville, IN, my hometown) about his self-published* Ax-Taxi, *an article about Animé, an article on toys (I think—both by friends of mine), an excerpt with my opinions on a news article about a postal lady who was dumping her mail in the woods instead of delivering it, & (my personal favourite) an interview with a (Joe, I think) Mattingly, a 92-year-old retired meteorologist who worked on the Manhattan Project & also lived in Evansville (I was surprised to learn he was also the uncle of Don Mattingly & was, at the time, looking forward to going to watch the Yankees & his nephew play. I still regret being too lazy to ever give him a copy of the interview, like he requested)*

"Anyway, I was to catch a ride with Todd Foxx [spelt both "Fox" and "Foxx" by David—I apologize to Mr. Fox if I've guessed wrong] and a friend of his, Ted Haycraft, only to go to the show, mind you. But, they ended up leaving earlier & stood me up, I think It really brought me down. My Mom saw it had, too She then—only once or twice in my life in doing so—surprised me by saying she would drive me to Chicago, call Dad & return home the next day.

"Arriving in Chicago, I was again surprised for—upon showing my fanzine (which I was going to give away) to the man at the door who asked to see it -he suggested I get a table, start a mailing list & sell my fanzine. I was shocked, but we gave him $20.00 and did it.

"Now, it had been my sole intention to see you that day But, I never did. It was like the Hallmark presentation of The Fourth Wise Man *with Martin Sheen. I ended up selling my fanzines (95 cents) like hotcakes, talked to Terry Moore right next to me, had the guy on the other side of me ask how I was selling my book Even Todd Foxx, who ended up setting up asked it. "I'm just encouraging people to buy it," I said. I think I sold 50 copies, all that I had brought (I don't have a copy for myself,-to this day, even). But, back to my point*

I never got to talk to you (I don't think). But, at the end of the show, a man with brown hair, dark yellow tinted glasses, wearing a ball cap & having a high voice who looked very much in charge, told me he wasn't you I told him about my success that day & he smiled, saying something in agreement, as in, "That's all it takes" It was a great day. One of the best in my life; even though I didn't meet you."

That was a great letter. What a testimony to the (ahem) spirit of the pretty-much-forgotten Spirits of Independence stops—the same spirit that compels me to keep one foot in the water with my annual appearance at Bob Corby's S.P.A.C.E. Where else would "the man at the door" (probably Steve H. or Tim G., since they were very much the men in charge—and, I know, bitterly disappointed when their second I.C.E show fell a little flat) suggest that an attendee might become an exhibitor, just because he saw him carrying 50 copies of his fanzine? Very, very gratifying

If it looks as if I might be tempted to get a swelled head from all this, you don't know David W. Johnson (as I was coming to know him), as this was followed in May—after he had moved back to 1702 Pollack Avenue in Evansville, Indiana—by "More Stuff," (5/4) "Politics" and "Religion" (5 5), "Local Access" and "My Mom and *Cerebus*"…

"My Mom doesn't understand why I find Cerebus *funny. For a long time now, I've, on occasion, had long conversations with her on a number of different subjects. I don't think she's grasped many of my thoughts on things. Still, when it comes to comics, I've tried to show her stuff that I like e g* The Dark Knight Returns, The Killing Joke *(Moore & Bolland), Paul Pope's* THB, Bone, The Tick, Uncle Scrooge *(by Don Rosa) &* Cerebus. *Out of that list, she's read—and didn't have much to say about—*Dark Knight, Killing Joke *(& maybe* Watchmen*); The* Tick *she really liked (especially the Ben Edlund ones. Particularly #1 & 2);* THB *she told me I talked up too much & she didn't think it was really all that special like I did;* Uncle Scrooge· The Life & Times *by Don Rosa, she really liked & laughed out loud a lot, like she did with* The Tick *#1 & 2,* Bone *she loyally follows & has every issue, but the recent storylines, becoming more mystical & the involvement of 'prayer stones,' had her—being a Pentecostal—a little concerned;* Cerebus *did nothing for her*

"Knowing she's a fan of the Marx Brothers, I showed her my Free Cerebus *and…nothing. 'But, don't you find this funny?' I asked her. 'See, it's a parody of Groucho & Chico. Don't you find the wordplay humorous?' 'No,' she said 'But, look here, Cerebus is teaching two valuable lessons, when he takes and throws this lady's baby like a football -don't you find that funny? Dave Sim's got Cerebus being a Pope?'*

'I just don't find it funny, but I understand you do,' she said

That was the last time I showed my Mom a copy of Cerebus*. Still, I have often (with* Cerebus*) discussed plots, essays, letters, comic Previews of other creators & etc with her. I recall trying to explain the gist of Alan Moore's interview with you to her."*

Boy, I'd have loved to have been a fly on the wall for the particular discussion, I remember thinking.

"P.S. According to the World Encyclopaedia of Comics *under the* Cerebus *heading (or Dave Sim), it reads that Cerebus will end sometime in 2002. Huh. I don't know how that mistake was made exactly."*

Have to admit that I reckoned it might be better to finish my marathon solo after that level of encouragement. But there was always something of interest in David's letters, as I was to find out.

. "Ozzy Osbourne". .

"I hate to say it, but Sharon Osbourne, his wife, has Ozzy pussy-whipped Sadly, Ozzy admits it 'Call it whatever you like, Sharon runs the show, man,' said Ozzy Sharon, who's Ozzy's manager, took much of the center stage throughout the episodes. Sharon's even the producer of The Osbournes, *right behind the Executive Producer, & is the first Osbourne shown during the introduction.*

"It's definitely a spectacle, although a sad one, as Sharon calls Ozzy 'Daddy," his two kids run around wild & all of Sharon's dogs and cats poop & piss all over his mansion.

"On one episode, Sharon & Kelly talk about yeast infections. 'I've never had a yeast infection except one time,' argued Kelly. 'Don't worry, you'll get them,' assured Sharon. It was kinda gross I have to say!"

*…and then straight into "*The Sandman*". .(this one was a classic')*

"Recently I almost bought a load of Cerebus *back issues. Instead—since I've never read it, having wanted to for years—I bought the entire TPB collection of* The Sandman. *It cost me $200.00. Now, I was going to buy the* Cerebus *issues mainly to get your essays I haven't read. But, it's a strange thing for me; I do want to read the essays, but, after I do so, I know I'll probably never pick up that issue for years, if not forever. I'll digest your essay &, for the most part, I don't forget it.*

"Anyway, The Sandman *I'm enjoying & I'm only halfway through the third TPB collection. Still, I had thought that I would have more ideas to write you letters if I had bought the* Cerebus *back issues. So, I hope you don't mind as I continue to write you whatever's on my mind, in my once-a-week letter to you. Until March, April, May or etc. of 2004, then, I'll keep encouraging you that you're almost there."*

At this point, of course, I was picturing my epitaph: "Here Lies Dave Sim: He Knew Neil Gaiman Personally" This was followed by..."The BBC" and "The Last Episode of *Buffy*" both from David's letter of 5/25. The next day, he followed up with "Kids on a Leash" and "Spanking a Child" (having seen more than his fair share of families with small children in his job at Busch Gardens' "Triceratops Encounter," needless to say, David thinks spanking disobedient children is a great idea). Even though nothing came in through the entire month of June and much of July (which made me think, "Well, there goes David Johnson of Evansville, Indiana") he was still close to an average letter-a-week pace when he resumed 7/22, this time dropping the subject headings. Another one for 7/28 was too interesting not to print here:

"In Catcher in the Rye *by J.D. Salinger, Phoebe corrects Holden, telling her brother that, 'it's 'can a body meet a body coming thru the rye'. I think. (I know 'can' was also 'gin,' I think). Yet, once, in an older (1930s) collection of Robert Burns' complete works, I was shocked to find what I think were the words 'fuck' and 'cunt' in the poem.*

"Previously, I'd only known the line in question, 'Can a body love a body coming thru the rye?' to read as so. But, in the collection it read, 'Gin a body f—k a body coming thru the rye,' I think. Secondly, I think 'Jenny was a poor, wet body,' likewise read, 'Jenny was a poor, wet c—t' ('Fuck' was also mentioned another time also).

"Feeling short-changed 'fuck' & 'cunt' all these years..."

...I'm sure you're not alone in that, I remember thinking...

"...I scanned through the library's other Burns collections...and nothing! I brought this to some librarian's attention; wherefore, an internet search & a look through their reference section came up with the same listing of the poem in its, uh...censored form? Even my 1900 Burns collection lists it as such?

"If 'fuck' and 'cunt' is how the original song read &/or was spruced up by Burns, it may, in my opinion, add extra emphasis to the use of the word 'fuck' in Catcher in the Rye. *Holden wants to be the one who catches kids before they fall off the cliff & not have them end up wrecking their lives. He hates seeing the word 'fuck,' especially under the glass enclosure at the library where he can't rub it out. Yet, Phoebe corrected Holden when he quoted the poem wrong. So, Phoebe probably knew the word 'fuck' was in it; therefore I think it's possible that, not only did she make Holden swallow his own advice, by challenging (testing) him to not let her come with him, when he runs away, she already has dealt with seeing bad stuff and it hasn't affected her.*

"Finally, I was wondering if Salinger was being ironic in his knowledge that society, through censorship, had already deleted the word 'fuck' from Robert Burns' poem (the symbol of the glass enclosure in the reverse). If that's the case, then Salinger—more so than I thought before—with Catcher in the Rye*'s sensitive material, was ahead of his time if he knew censorship that well by exploring it on more than one level."*

Being wholly unfamiliar with Robert Burns' poetry—except for the obvious cultural touchstones like *Auld Lang Syne*, and what not—I

(continued on 3rd page following)

That fateful first meeting at the long-gone and much missed Moondance comic book store at Hadley Mall in Hadley, Mass. From left to right, Peter Laird, Kevin Eastman and some idiot wearing his sunglasses indoors.

found this observation pretty amazing (I also chuckled a bit picturing the esteemed Mr. Johnson calling a "fuck" and "cunt" shortage to the attention of some unsuspecting Evansville librarian).

This had followed another interesting paragraph:

> *"Speaking of* Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles *[co-] creator, Eastman, I read in an editorial, from the current* TMNT *(#9, I think) that Laird's going to reconfigure and reprint the original Eastman & Laird's* TMNT *#8 with Cerebus; reconfigure to mean he's gonna take Cerebus out of the book (& continuity for that matter) altogether. I guess he wants to tell more stories with the other characters from that book &/or reprint it in general. Kind of odd, I think, but I'll still consider the original* TMNT *#8 with Cerebus as the legit one"*

This goes back a ways. One of the implications of a crossover that I never anticipated when I agreed to do one with Kevin & Peter was reprint protocols.

Kevin & Peter signed an agreement with First Comics to reprint the early *TMNT* issues in colour, including (in volume 3) the Cerebus crossover. Since I considered First Comics to be corporate, I agreed with the reprinting as long as I could have a letter from First acknowledging that they laid no claim to Cerebus as an intellectual property (which they provided: in the process thoroughly amazing Wilf Jenkins because they hadn't asked for a reciprocal letter assuring them that I wouldn't sue them for unauthorized use of Cerebus) and I told Kevin I wasn't interested in getting paid any royalties. A few times he tried to persuade me to accept the royalties, and I finally agreed (they totalled about 30,000 dollars at that point), thinking I was just being an ideological extremist (as everyone always tells me I am). Sure enough, the day I got the cheque in, we got hit with a tax audit, at the end of which we ended up owing the government you guessed it—$30,000. Small wonder that I always believed in the inherent justice of the universe long before I accepted the existence of God—and, comparable small wonder, when *Spawn* 10 came around and I found out I was actually going to get paid for writing it (something which hadn't been discussed) I endorsed the back of the cheque and sent it to the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund within 30 seconds of its arrival in the mail. Kevin and I finally agreed to let the story go out of print (the original print-run had been 185,000 copies, so it wasn't as if it was ever going to be rare, I thought—of course, twenty years later you sure can't pick one up for cover price). In retrospect, this was a mistake. Kevin wrote and drew the story and I rewrote and lettered Cerebus' dialogue and redrew Cerebus. It was a collaboration. Under the terms of my own philosophy of the Creator Bill of Rights—that artists and writers should always have the right to reprint their own work—we are both entitled to reprint *TMNT* #8, whatever we may have agreed to on a handshake basis. This was a "minority of one" view at the Northampton Summit, however, which is why the final text read "We are entitled to *fully* own what we *fully* create." Since neither Mirage Studios (Kevin & Peter) nor Warp Graphics (represented by Richard Pini at the Summit)—both reliant on freelance creators as a major part of their publishing operations—were about to endorse anything which acknowledged full ownership of collaborative creativity and since freelancers (most of the rest of the participants) are notoriously philosophical about who owns what, as long as they have steady paying work, there was nothing I could do but capitulate, in the larger interest of having won my point that I had the right to choose where and how my work was distributed (in itself a compromise, since the verb I had first proposed was "control"): the original dispute with Diamond over selling *High Society* direct to retailers which had led first to the Toronto Summit and then to the Northampton Summit. In my vision of a fair world, I should be able to call Mirage and say that I want to include the Cerebus crossover in a collection of Cerebus collaborations, have them dupe the negatives at my expense and compensate them however I see fit out of the publishing profits. As likewise, Pete Laird should be able to reprint issue #8 as often as he wants and compensate me as he sees fit out of the publishing profits. I'm not sure if Pete "bought out" Kevin's share of the Turtles, but that gets into another interesting area in my perfect world—should a creator be allowed to completely divest himself of his financial interest in what he's created? or should there always be at least a minimal participation so that if (let's say) the Turtles on their present go-round or their next go-round earn (let's say) a Trillion Dollars, Kevin isn't the metaphorical little boy who cries down the lane—he always makes something off of the Turtles even if it's only a token amount and even if he has, contractually, given up creative and administrative control and decision-making completely to Peter. These were always the areas that interested me and the legal conundrums that I thought we, the pioneers in the comic book direct market, were ethically obligated to solve for future generations (so we didn't end up having a Superman-style completely-legal-but-wholly-unethical-miscarriage-of-justice around our generation's necks)—at the very least by making freelancers aware of the importance of the negatives, the film from which the work is reproduced. Perfect example: when Don Simpson and Denis Kitchen had a major falling out after Don's contract with Kitchen Sink expired and Don wanted to self-publish *Megaton Man*, and wanted Denis to send him the negatives, Denis refused. I happened to be spending time in Northampton in that period and had a chance to discuss it with Denis, pretty much taking Don's side: what good are the negatives to you if you don't own the publishing rights? Denis pointed out that he had discussed it with Will Eisner and Will had agreed that Denis owned the negatives. Which, legally, he does. He paid for them, he owns them. Which, to me, only pointed up the value in suggesting that freelancers should make the negatives part of their negotiations. If the publishing rights revert to them, so do the negatives. Depending on where you're getting your negatives shot, they can cost 10 to 20 dollars per page. On a two-hundred page graphic

novel or ten or fifteen issues of a periodical (the situation Dandy Don was looking at with *Megaton Man*) that is not chump change. I ask guys who are under contract in the small press, "Do you even know where the negatives for your backlist titles are?" Are they at the printer or does the publisher have them? If they're at the printer and the publisher gets behind on his printing bills, they can be seized as an asset. Or if the printer goes out of business, they can be seized as an asset (really, really legally, they are owned by the printer unless otherwise specified a lot of printers save money by recycling the physical film: so, you know, that got sorted out in court in terms of legal precedents a loooong while back). Negatives are being phased out in favour of disk, these days, and this is another thing that needs to be watched. You can have your graphic novel on a disk that's compatible with your printer's software in 2003 and completely unusable in 2015. As I say, I've never found even a glimmer of interest in discussing these things, let alone in establishing industry-wide policy about them, so I'm glad, thanks to David W Johnson, to have had this last (I assume) futile chance to mention it.

Pete: If you want to excise Cerebus for spite or "anti-Dave Sim-the-evil-misogynist purification," that's fine—no hard feelings on my part, either way. If you want to excise Cerebus because of legal complications, I give you my word of honour as a gentleman that—as long as you lay no legal claim to Cerebus as an intellectual property—you are fully entitled to reprint the original issue 8 in whatever way you see fit and to compensate me or not compensate me as you see fit If you're the one publishing it and you're not publishing anything else on a work-made-for-hire basis, I will happily accept any payment personally. If you have licensed it to be published by someone who does work-made-for-hire or if you are publishing anyone on a work-made-for-hire basis, then I would appreciate it if you and/or they would run a disclaimer saying that they/you lay no claim to Cerebus as an intellectual property and send any and all royalties to which I would otherwise be entitled to the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund. And, if it's not too much trouble, send a cheque to Kevin as well, since he wrote and drew the damn thing. It'll at least buy a few rounds for him and Simon Bisley the next time they're out on the town.

Meanwhile, back at David W. Johnson. It's now 8/5:

"My friend, Ted Haycroft, that I know from working at the Book Broker, drew you the sketch of Cerebus Heh, it was 3 a.m. We were in a bar listening to a band called 'Chelsea Morning.' Ted was drawing all these doodles of the band, superheroes, rock stars, & etc. He drew one of Cerebus around the time I asked for a napkin to draw him Keith and Mick from 'Aardvark Droppings.'

'May I have the one of Cerebus?' I asked Ted. ' I'll mail it to Dave Sim with my weekly letter & cartoon.' Ted said, 'Tell Dave we...' that is, you and Ted, '...go way back' and that he's been reading Cerebus *for a long time. Ted's told me stories before about convincing the Book Broker's owner into ordering* Cerebus *back when it was going through Glendale (or even further back). For a while, Chuck (the owner) even read* Cerebus, *back in the beginning. Which, trust me, is like W.C Fields saying he loved kids ('Come here, don't worry, I love ya!')"*

I've just been through my two foot-high stacks of fan mail looking for Ted's (I can call him Ted, we go way back) sketch (blue ink on a bar napkin—every other time I've had to go through those two stacks of mail, the bar napkin was always right there) so I could run it on this page. No luck. But, thanks, Ted Ted going to bat for us with Chuck "way back when" reminds me to ask if any of you might be interested in becoming *Cerebus* "monitors" at your local comic-book shop. The store owners are up to their eyeballs, as it is, and I was thinking that having a volunteer program with someone who comes in every other week or so to tell them which *Cerebus* trade paperbacks they're out of would be very helpful in keeping the books available and in stock while giving the store owners one less thing to keep track of With the store owner's cooperation of course (as in, asking nicely if he or she would like you to volunteer to keep track of the *Cerebus* trades—I'm looking for cooperative, courteous volunteer *Cerebus* monitors, not self-appointed *Cerebus* professional pains-in-the-ass. Check with the store owner first and if its okay with him or her, contact me with their store info and we'll try to help as much as we can from our end with promotion materials for those stores willing to keep all of the volumes in stock at all times with your help). Seemed like a good place to mention it.

But, that brings us to "Aardvark Droppings," the one-a-week comic strip that David included with his letters, which began with the premise that a bunch of Cerebus fans were holding a vigil on the front lawn of the Off-White House, in anticipation of the completion of issue 300.

Dave: No, really, there are advantages, Gerhard, to Cerebus *junkies.*

Ger: Think. It's been five months now since they started camping out on your lawn. I think you're being too nice to them Take my advice. Tell them to leave or you'll never finish Cerebus*—that you'll stop at #299. I mean, what use are they—just waiting out on your lawn until March, 2004?*

Dave: Here. Watch this, Gerhard...I NEED COFFEE HERE!

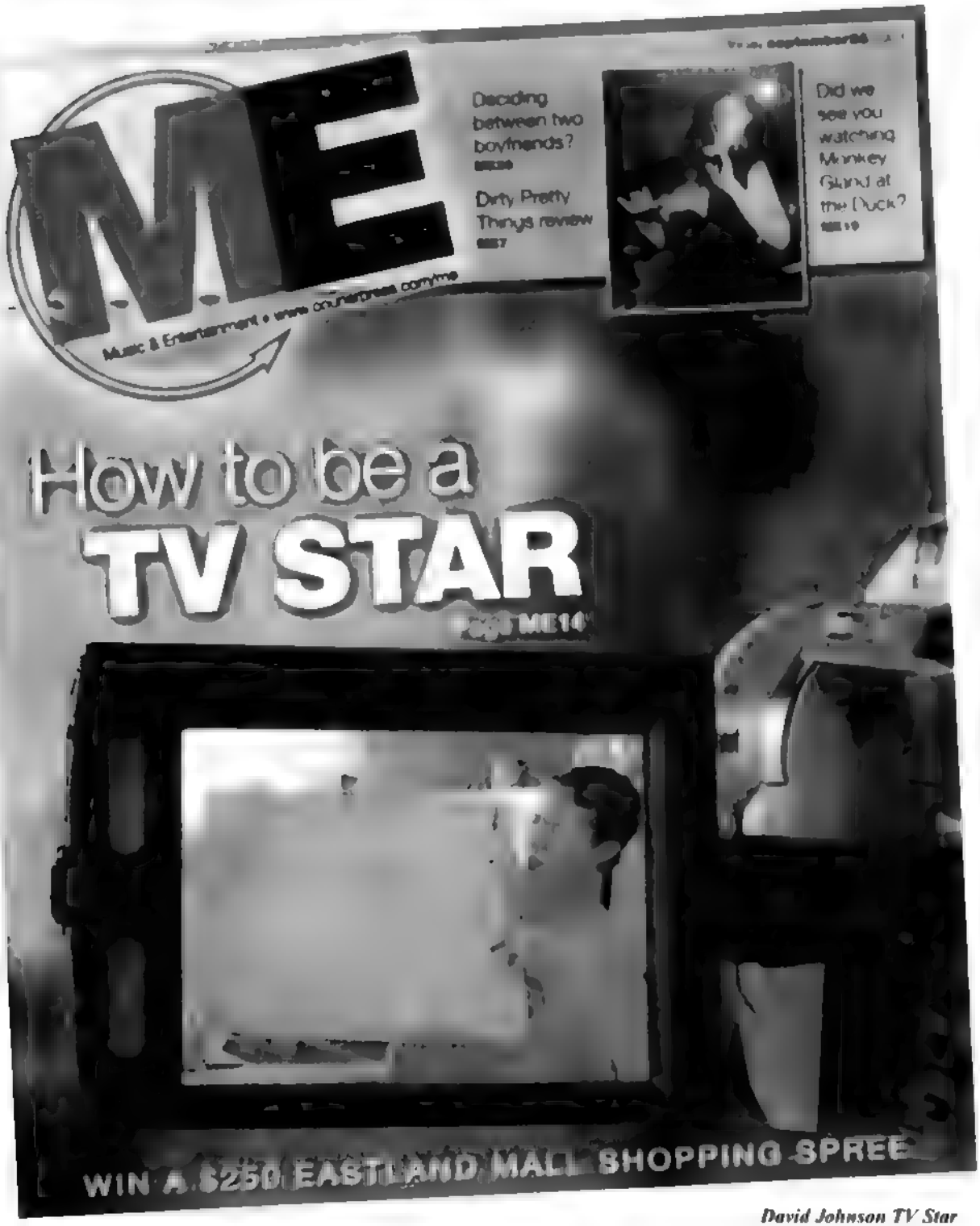
(six hands appear from the side of the panel, all holding steaming mugs of coffee)

Gerhard: Whoa! Now, THAT's GOOD!

Dave: No, last week I had twice this many. They're slipping. Perhaps you're right.

Or how about this one:

Dave: So, you're my last female fan? I didn't know I had any left
Female fan Oh yes I even like the newer stuff like Church & State *Even the sequel'*
Dave: Uh, "sequel,". Right Here, why don't you read this?
Female fan: Oh! Women. *A book about us!*
Dave You might say that Borrow it return it tomorrow & tell me what you think
Caption: The next day..
(a copy of Women *hurtles in from the left going SPLAT' against Dave's chest)*
Dave (to the reader) And that's why you'll never see Women *collected into a hardback'*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David Johnson TV Star
was cover-featured on ME for 26 September 2003

Having gotten his feet wet with a weekly four-panel strip, David decided to branch out and do a twelve-part story called "The Final Daze," where Mick and Keith show up to join the vigil, knocking on the front door and causing me to faint dead way.

Keith: We better call Ger with the bad news .

Mick: That gent at Now & Then Books told you it's now our responsibility that Cerebus *#294 is finished for the fans on time.*

(Keith had phoned Now & Then to order any page of original artwork featuring himself)

Keith. (reading 289-290) The newest issue—uh, issues has too many words Let's get away from that

Gerhard ends up inking Mick & Keith's fill-in issue and has to slide his driver's license under the door to prove who he is (Keith: Don't fret! Your full name is safe with us—uh, "Ger"). By part 7, Mick & Keith had phoned Alan Moore having found instructions to do so "In case of unconsciousness, death or .worse!" Alan sends a hologram of himself and catches up in person later on (Alan: I understand my friend Dave is in need of my services, so, please direct me to myself.)

Alan: He's not dead.

Mick: Thank God for that.

Keith: Amen. Look, Mick, he's still sleeping like a baby from the shock.

Alan: Yes, boys It makes what I'm about to do seem evil in comparison. Oh, well FETCH ME A WOMAN, BOYS!

Keith: I knew it! Can't live with one & ya can't live without one, huh?

Dave: (wide awake) Says who? All of you Out!

8/27, 9/11. And then the 9/30 letter began "I'm at the Amsterdam train station, waiting for my train to Venice, Italy." With it was a postcard of a windmill. "Out of the five-odd couples or persons I've struck up a conversation with (or vice-versa) three of them were Canadians I'll mention I read *Cerebus* by Dave Sim in Kitchener, Ontario, to which they reply, 'I don't know it, but Kitchener's close by.' Kitchener's always close by?'" This made me laugh. The local TV station describes Kitchener's location as "Central South-western Ontario"—so, yeah, if you're from Southern Ontario, just about every place is "close by" Kitchener And, no, there is no awareness of Dave Sim in Kitchener (let alone the rest of Ontario) which always surprises *Cerebus* fans who make a special side trip and expect that people in Kitchener will know what they're talking about. 10/4 a postcard. "I've seen the Roman Forums, the Coliseum, Michelangelo's Moses, the Sistine Chapel, St. Peter's Basilica & the Trevi Fountain." At the time, I remember thinking: I've seen the Macdonald's inside Market Square on Friday night (my weekly excursion as the schedule devoured the rest of my life), King Street, Farrah Foods, William's Coffee Pub and Kitchener City Hall Repeatedly.

One of the more interesting things about David W. Johnson is that he has his own public access television program called "The Kitchen Magician" which—reading between the lines—was no small task in getting on the air. He was even cover-featured on *ME/Music & Entertainment* for 26 September

"I think the reporter did a great job tactfully scolding our two local cable providers for basically doing little (if anything) to honor agreements with cable subscribers & the city, by providing public, educational & governmental channels (P.E.G)."

*"On the other hand, from the get-go, I realized that the woman reporter wanted to use my Mom's involvement in the show as the hook [*David's Mom, Doris Johnson, is the cameraperson for his show*]. The fact that the article saw print at all, I think, was due to my cloak & dagger tactics, wherefore previously (the last three-and-a-half years, off and on) I'd worked behind the scenes to subtly maneuver my knowledge and presence into any media outlet that I could, pushing off & shoving public access down their throats. In this latest case—after calling a reporter about an interview she did with a chef, telling her he might be interested in knowing about public access—she inquired, 'What is public access?' After hearing about it, she asked if she could do a story about my TV show. A couple of conversations later, after telling her my family was going out of town for two weeks, she told me she would wait until my Mom came back before sitting in on one of my shows 'The fabulous Mom has to be there!' and that, that was one of the most important things Then, concerned that the article would be more about my Mom than the public access channel & my show in general, I asked a friend for his advice. 'I've worked three-and-a-half years to get the newspaper to do an informative & most importantly—positive story on public access & what kind of variety of shows I make, that I'm concerned that this article's approach may take the feminine angle that '29-year-old male, with cameraman.. ah...woman, Mom produces TV show out of her kitchen.' My friend said the reporter was likely to go with her 'hook' no matter what, & just to hope the version of the story to see print would publicize public access in the way that I'd hoped it would. Well, the article did have 'Mom overtones' to it; Mom even was worked into the last sentence of the last paragraph with a*

quote In conclusion, the article didn't print the correct phone number for the Sigecom public access provider, Michael Alvay Surprisingly, the competitor cable company said they would have—and always would have (which was untrue)—aired public access programs I called the number in the article & the woman in charge of it eventually (twice) mentioned how the article made them look bad The second time, I informed her of my three-and-a-half years of involvement, pointing out to her those past superiors of her company that had, point-blank, told me, 'No!' After a beautiful pause, I think she regained her composure & went on talking. Anyway, 24 hours later, already changing her tune, she asked me if turning in my show on DVD would be a problem? Knowing I needn't have opened my mouth, I stupidly said 'Yes' (those machines: VHS to DVD cost 600 to 1,000 dollars). 'Do you think an average person will be able to do that?' I asked 'Yes, probably. .' was her reply. In the past, her superiors mentioned DVD, too. I, therefore, hope that isn't their way of negating my airtime to zip."

I think that it will interest David—as a fellow Monotheist—that his observations on his trials and tribulations in gaining access to public-access TV excited my own interest in the same subject Back when I still had a television and was watching religious programming, I often thought that what I really objected to in most televangelism was the marginalization of scripture and the emphasis on commentary (the same thing that ultimately drove me away from St. John's and into fasting in Ramadan), particularly among Christian TV evangelists They would read a verse from Matthew, Mark, Luke or John (without inflection and at 78 rpm) and then spend fifteen minutes telling you what it meant to them. I always thought the emphasis should have been, at the very least, reversed. Fifteen minutes of scripture and then ten seconds of what it means to them (without inflection and at 78 rpm). Like most of my internal arguments, this would follow a prescribed pattern: "There's always public access, Dave. Go on there and just read scripture and screw the commentary if it bothers you that much". With the end of *Cerebus*, the biggest problem—finding the time—was taken care of and I resolved to look into it (figuring I could tape a daily show in one weekly six-hour taping session and probably have all of the Law and the Prophets done in six months to a year, followed by the Gospels and the Koran). I called Rodgers Cable, the local outlet, to ask about the requirements. And got a lot of those same "beautiful pauses" David describes. I was told that I should submit a proposal and a budget and that programming was decided on by a committee twice a year. What is this, I thought, NBC? "Well, what's the lowest budget involved," I asked, " it's just going to be turning a camera on a guy sitting in a chair reading a book." "Oh, well, see," she says, "that wouldn't be good television. They wouldn't approve it." "Uh, I think they have to. It's public access. You don't have to guarantee me a time slot, you can air it wherever you have space, but I'm pretty sure the CRTC guidelines say that you have to air any show that I give you. That was the only way the CRTC would agree to license cable operators way back when. The carrot was the excessive profits and price-gouging. The stick was that you had to supply television access to any individual in the community the cable operator was being licensed to price-gouge who was interested." As I say, many "beautiful pauses" ensued. Anyway, as a retiree with nothing but time on his hands, I'm looking forward to researching the CRTC guidelines for public access (I think they're obligated to create new channels if they don't have room for all of the programs submitted to them), visiting local MP Karen Redman's office to find out what the process is for reporting a violation of CRTC guidelines, getting a letter from Wilf Jenkins to send to the "Senior Producer" at the local Rodgers Cable Seriously. "Senior Producer". Those people really do think they're NBC.

I was thinking about it already, but, as I say, David W. Johnson was instrumental in giving me the kick in the ass that I needed, so I'm happy to thank him for his contribution here.

I read up a bit on the history of cable television in Canada at the library and I'm beginning to suspect that I'm mistaking the free-enterprise, pioneer spirit of public access TV in the U.S. for a universal condition and not taking into account that I live in a Marxist dictatorship. The secretary in Karen Redman's office gave me a phone number and address for the CRTC in Hull, Quebec. I phoned and asked how I would acquire the guidelines for producing my own public access program in Canada. I was told that that would require one of the (partners? Mandarins? Poobahs?) returning my call. She took my name and number.

In fairness to our bloated Marxist government, I got a return phone call from Maria DaSilva within about an hour. When I explained what I was interested in, she went into her computer and turned up the fact that there was a relatively new policy (October 10, 2002) on public access and that I could check that out on the Internet. When I told her I didn't have Internet access, she said she would print out that 34-page section of the new ruling and mail it to me. So, that should either tell me what I want to know, or at least give me a solid base for my next question (whatever that turns out to be).

Today is December 20 and the last letter I got from David W. Johnson was dated November 16, so he's falling a little behind on his proposed schedule But, given that I have around thirty individual letters here, sent over the course of seven months, two postcards, the twelve-part "Final Daze" strips and another half dozen "Aardvark Droppings" strips, I think I can afford to cut him a little slack, don't you?

Thank you, David. It was an unexpected pleasure to have company along the last stretch of road.

* * * * * * *

Adam Beechen

July 9, 2003

Dear Dave,

So, nine issues to go.

I'm sure you're going to get a lot of long letters in the coming months—if you haven't started getting them already—congratulating you on the approaching conclusion of your journey with Cerebus This'll be just another letter on the pile, but I wanted to add my own voice to the chorus—and it's a different kind of congratulatory note, so hopefully, you'll bear with me.

I started reading the book regularly around #48, although I remember picking up #37 and #38 some months before that, having seen the comic advertised in *The Comics Journal* and having become intrigued. *Cerebus* became a constant presence in my life after that, a presence I looked forward to every month. I'll admit to you here that I haven't always understood where you were taking the characters, or the points you were trying to make, or how an individual issue fit into the greater whole. When this first started happening, I said to myself, "It'll all make sense in the end, you'll get it when you read the whole thing start-to-finish." Now I'm not even sure if I'll understand it even then. But, that doesn't matter to me. I've enjoyed it on my own level, I've never once thought about quitting, and I've continued to trust you completely as a creator expressing a personal vision. I'm honoured to have been a part of *Cerebus* on my own small level.

I'm going to tell you two things, now, about how *Cerebus* has affected me in the twenty-two years I've been reading it. Just two things, probably pretty small, really, but of deep importance to me, and for which, above and beyond your work, I'll always be grateful to you.

I wrote you some letters in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As big a fan as I was of your book, I was just as big a fan of your letters page, and came to know the names of all your regular correspondents It felt like they all knew each other, and it was some sort of after-hours (after-pages?) club where everyone got together and socialized after the reading of the book was done. I very much wanted to be a part of it. So, I wrote you some letters, beginning when I was about to graduate from college, and then a few more over the next couple of years, finally stopping for whatever reason when I was in graduate school. I remember you writing me back to tell me my first letter was going to be printed, and how happy that made me feel I remember sending you a Single Page, which you accepted and paid me for, which I couldn't believe. I remember sending you a four-page comic I did in four hours as sort of a back-up to the "24-hour comic" you were excited about at the time—you sent me a nice, encouraging and flattering note telling me you liked the story but didn't have any place to run it, but that you'd keep your eye out for such a place. And after I wrote you a letter about my own interaction with Gary Groth, I had the occasion to meet you at a signing you did with Martin Wagner and Colleen Doran in Killeen, Texas. I introduced myself, and you greeted me like an old friend, complimenting me on my letter, and talking to me about it for several minutes. I walked away from that signing as happy about comics as I had ever been.

Warm memories, those. But a few weekends ago, I was cleaning out a storage locker I rent, and found several notebooks of correspondence I had saved over the years. In them, I found the letters you wrote me in response to my own letters. They weren't long letters, or detailed. But they were personal always directed to me, always on topic of whatever I had written to you about. They were professional and friendly. And there were a bunch of them. I think there must have been one for every letter I ever wrote you.

I was blown away, seeing those letters again. You've taken some terrific hits in the comics press over the years for your views, attitudes or whatever else. I won't remember any of that in the years to come. What I'll remember is that you produced a comic every month that I enjoyed for more than two decades. And you found the time to write back even the most remote fan—every time he wrote to you—no matter how busy you must have been. And I can imagine you did the same for hundreds of other fans and loyal readers. That makes me feel like *Cerebus* was, in some small way, for me. That there was a connection on some small level between creator and audience. I'm a writer now (I write cartoons for television—fanboy made good), and that's a connection I will never ever take for granted, in large part because of your example.

Second thing. Also has to do with the letters page.

Going back to our encounter in Killeen, that Gary Groth letter I wrote you apparently made an impression on another member of the *Cerebus* family. About a week after the letter saw print, in #164 (I just found it again recently), I got a letter from Larry Young. I knew Larry's name well from your letters page, mostly from a very funny back-and-forth you encouraged between Larry and Rob Lavender. To my mind, he was one of the Big Shots of the letters page. His note was a very brief compliment on my Gary Groth letter. I was in grad school in Austin at the time, didn't know a lot of people, and so I wrote him a long letter back, thanking him, talking about Cerebus and meeting you, and so on.

He wrote me again, and he's been one of my best friends ever since.

I didn't meet Larry until I moved to Los Angeles in 1995, although he sent me publications he did for Brian Hibbs' store in San Francisco, the first photo ever taken of Larry with the woman he'd marry, Mimi Rosenheim, and a t-shirt bearing the drawing you did in response to his wedding invite (a headshot of Cerebus saying, "Another one bites the dust"). In return, I sent him scripts I was writing and we'd talk comics endlessly.

After moving to California, I made my first trip to the San Diego Comicon in 1996, met up with Larry and Mimi, and crashed in their hotel room, where Larry and I kept Mimi awake for far too long talking comics on every level from creators' rights to "Hulk vs. Thor." We decided we had to be connected somewhere along the family tree.

Now we talk all the time. I see Larry and Mimi at Wondercon and Comicon, and I venture up to San Francisco a couple of other times a year as well. We've followed and cheered each other's careers—Larry, as you may know, is now a publisher in his own right, writing his own books and publishing such luminaries as Warren Ellis and Brian Wood. I've somehow managed to crack writing for television, as I mentioned, and have now written more than 50 produced episodes of children's entertainment, everything from *Rugrats* to *X-men: Evolution*. Most recently, I've even written two graphic novel scripts and, if all goes according to plan, Larry will be the one publishing them. Even if he doesn't, this is no short-term friendship. Larry and Mimi and I will be friends the rest of our lives.

And that's because of you, Dave. As important as your comic has been to me—as a source of constant entertainment, as a stimulus for thought, as a reassuring presence in my life—it's what you've done for me outside of comics (but still thanks to *Cerebus*) that causes me to write this heartfelt thank-you note. You treated me like a person, instead of just another fanboy, and you introduced me to some of the most important people in my life.

Cerebus is a towering achievement. I thank you for it and everything else.

Best,
Adam Beechen

It was one of my great regrets that Carol West quitting meant that I wasn't going to be able to answer the fan mail until after issue 300. Up until that time, typing envelopes for the fan-mail answers was partly a "make-work" project to help flesh out the secretarial duties (like the freebie list and subscriptions) since there just isn't that much office work associated with publishing an independent comic book and partly just something I always wanted to do from back in my fanzine days when getting a letter back from a pro was the nearest thing to Heaven on earth I could imagine. Dividing the workload between Ger and myself after Carol left meant that something had to be left out and correspondence was elected.

"Rob Lavender and Larry Young," I remember thinking, reading Adam's letter. "I had forgotten all about that period." I remembered the time after that when Larry Young had decided he was going to beat me to issue 300 by doing his planetlar *fanzine—the precursor of his very successful ait (*Astronauts in Trouble*) planetlar publishing outfit weekly. Like with James Owen's assertion that* Starchild *would be a monthly comic (he allowed for the fact that* Cerebus *might very well be the "other" monthly comic book that stayed on schedule), all I could do was wait and see. Larry had a good run at it. Ka-bing ka-bing ka-bing. Week after week. Must've been seventeen or eighteen of them. Then an issue came in with a picture of Mimi (as I recall). And then it was ka-bing . .. .sput . . ka-bing.....wheeze..... ka .....and that was it for him beating me to issue 300.*

Since I had, at the time, a grand total of about three completely favourable non-David W Johnson letters to print dated 2003, I decided to call Adam and see if it was okay to print his letter. I got his answering machine with his cell-phone number and I thought, well, let's give it a try. Wouldn't own one myself, but I see a lot of kids using them damn near everywhere. He picked up on, like, the second ring. Hello? I told him who it was and asked him where he was—you know, like in a meeting or something—in case I had to call back. It turned out that he was getting off a plane in New York City! We chatted for a little while and he said sure I could print his letter. I even got a New York, New York postcard from him a few days later.

I've got to shake my head, though. One of those "old folks" moments. Call a guy in Los Angeles and get him in New York!

* * * * * * *

Sgt. Brian L. Moore

12 August 03

Sgt Moore, Brian L. 6557,
685th TC / WSONAA , 371 CSG
3 rd COSCOM,
Unit 91742
APO AE 09327-1742

Dear Dave:

Good luck with your upcoming final 300th issue of *Cerebus*. I have been reading for ten years and I have not only enjoyed the story and art, but at many times found the commentary on the comic-book industry, politics, feminism, etc. in the form of your articles published in the comic to be even more entertaining

Evidently your commentary was if not entertaining to some definitely of interest I went on the Web before getting deployed and used a search engine to see if you had a site. Obviously (to you) you did not have a site. You really don't need one There were several sites by people I've never heard of before and by people in the comic industry (that I was made aware of through your comic) who had things to say about your many controversies! It's very much like free advertising in some ways, but in others, I can see it as an affront. Many of these comic-book professionals published (now they're published by others) comics that I, personally, would not have bought had they not been previewed in the back of *Cerebus*.

Friends come and go, as I've seen in my own life I thought that it was adequately put in *Guys* when everyone Cerebus knew up to that point drifted apart Everyone in the *Latter Days* are younger than him New characters as well. It's as if each phase of the life cycle is a new beginning. You end up having to start over.

You probably have some war questions. Okay. Here goes.

Before I get to the desert, I have to explain how I got to the desert (i.e. why did I join the U S Army Reserves?) After my failed attempt to be a comic-book writer, I went to Columbia College in Chicago to become a filmmaker During the second semester of my freshman year, my house burned down I lived eighty miles south of Chicago in Kankakee, Illinois, so I had to commute. Money started getting tight. What I needed was a job that I couldn't tell to fuck off

The U S Army Reserves have lived up to that expectation My drill pay for two days a month and the $273.00-a-month G I Bill (if I attended school the previous month) gave me—in my senior year and at the pay grade of E-4 a little over $400.00 a month With a "rich kid" roommate paying his half of the rent and utilities, I was able to get an apartment in Chicago

By the time I graduated, I was broke and in debt. Forget the $60,000 loan debt—they'll take excuses! The phone and utilities weren't so forgiving. They would have to wait, too.

I have a skit where a guy sells his soul to the devil The devil comes to collect and the guy says, "Well, you're going to have to wait in line. I haven't paid *them*, either!"

Unlike the "rich kid" I wasn't going to get sent to L A for an internship or Columbia's L.A. program unless I was willing to hitchhike and live on the streets outside of the place I served my internship.

I was unemployed and, once again, stranded back in the small town Kankakee I ended up living in a car I had earlier "bought" by trading my apartment's washer/dryer set.

Then, the war First I was unemployed Then, I was deployed. Now, I am employed This pretty much sums up my opinion of the war

I'm a truck driver People like to shoot at truck drivers for some reason Nobody ever gets up in the morning and says, "Hey! Let's go fuck with the infantry!" Other than that, it's been a tolerable experience for me. I have free food and lodging I get paid regularly, no matter how much or how little work I do.

Many peace mongers from my school (Columbia College Chicago was founded by hippie anti-war activists during the Vietnam war era) were arrested protesting this war in Chicago while my company entered Iraq with 3rd I.D. [Infantry Division] It's a volunteer army so I never understood the point of their protest It isn't as if they have the draft to fear I'm the guy who is going to run the risk of being shot, stabbed, blown-up or gassed.

"It was the best of times. It was the worst of times."

"Good times," Flores smiled "Good times."

I've had a lot of laughs over here and hardship to bear, but I accepted that when I enlisted

I've learned to improvise We had a simple training mission. Our mission should we be deployed was to haul JP-8 fuel from the dock to the border as rear support Instead we were forward support. We drew outdated M818s (built during Vietnam) and flatbeds A company of infantry would hang onto the strap all the way to Iraq.

When the shooting started, they'd all jump off (a flatbed is just as it is described, a flat surface with wheels underneath. Forget walls and forget safety. It does not apply in a combat zone).

So far, my company has one dead, four wounded, and one crazy. I never thought a Reserve company would hit that score, but it is evidently common. A National Guard Unit that just redeployed home had two dead and two wounded. Our dead was a trucking accident. Our wounded were blown up by a UXO (unexploded ordinance). Their dead? One shot by a sniper. The other was shot in the face by a "civilian" who just walked up to him and pulled out a pistol. Their wounded were UXO's, too. We were hit by an ambush recently while escorting a HETT company (HETTs are semi-tractors so large and powerful that they are used to haul tanks. In Illinois, they are illegal because you can't fit them through a toll booth). Our gun trucks unloaded .50 machine-gun fire into an adobe brick building the attackers were in. The Iraqis surrendered, walking out with multiple wounds. They all died from their wounds. One soldier from the HETT National Guard Company didn't make it, either. A lot of part-timers are coming home in body bags. Soon, I should end up on a plane going home. When "soon" is, I have no idea.

In the meantime, I read a lot. I've read Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* (unabridged), Melville's *Moby Dick*, a stack of Robert Heinlein's science fiction novels from the PX, the new Harry Potter book, several editing magazines sent to me by an instructor from Columbia, your comics (#285-291), parts of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. I send them home after I read them (if they aren't destroyed - the heat melts the bindings' glue and they fall apart).

I was curious if you had any recommended reading to list. If I can't find it in a PX, I may be able to get somebody to send it to me. I bought a copy of the Koran. I plan on reading that after I read *The Icelandic Sagas* I had my father send me.

If you have any Cerebus posters or phonebooks lying around that you don't want, I'll be more than happy to put them to good use. All I have is casual pay for ready cash money. Checks, credit cards and the like are not in my possession right now and the Direct Market doesn't apply in terms of a PX purchase. But, if I had the means, I'd order some stuff from you. I used to have a signed print from you and Gerhard and signed *Church & State* I & II and *Jaka's Story*, but they were destroyed by the fire along with my comic-book collection. I have since replaced some of my missing Cerebus items. I have *Cerebus*, *High Society* and *Church & State* I & II as phone books. Right around *Minds*, my monthly issues pick up and are gap-free due to my subscription from AF Comics.

I understand that you have given up all electronic media. How far does that go? Do you still go to see movies or rent DVDs?

If so, you're probably going to miss my first feature. When I get back, I'm going to dump my money into a comedy I've been writing. I'll have DVD authoring capabilities. If you refuse to watch DVDs then I'll spare you the expense of sending you one.

I'm very curious what you intend to do after completing *Cerebus*. A long series again? A mini-series? A bunch of one-shots? Nine more issues from where I sit in the desert means that you are probably already done. Send me a flyer if you already have the project ready to roll.

What I would like to see is a phone book of your color work you did for *Epic* magazine and a few of the other magazines and comics you've done work on that don't exist anymore. There was a comic that had an EC feel to it with creator-owned projects you worked on along with Jim Starlin and the Howard the Duck creator, but I can't remember the name. I found only two issues of it and they are in Illinois. You could add that material to a "color" phone book. I would also like to see a phone book of just print articles. *Dave Says* or something.

One thing I'll always appreciate about the "phone book" editions is the joy of handing someone a 500-page comic BOOK to read.

Embrace the madness,

Sgt. Brian Lee Moore

Your letter came in a few weeks back and I found myself hamstrung by your going home "soon" line. Should I send books to you right away, or would you be apt to be heading out of Iraq while they were heading in? Just one of the many little problems floating around in my head that I sorted (past tense now) through while drawing. I finally decided that I'll send you a box of Guys *as soon as I have this answer inputted. If you are still in Iraq you can share them with the guys in your Unit and if you're back stateside, you can sell them to a local comic shop or something. I'll also see about the posters that we have around and send you a couple when we get around to unearthing the Off-White House basement in the spring.*

DVD was one of the electronic media I never had to give up, since I never got around to buying a player before I threw my television away. I do go to a movie occasionally, mostly for the Wide-Screen-Bottom-end-Bass-Dolby experience. What the movie is (even theoretically) about doesn't enter into it much for me. When it costs tens of millions to make with the idea of bringing in hundreds of millions it seems obvious to me that it is "about" the lowest common denominator. The last one I saw was School of Rock *on a strange day when I was inexplicably done what I had set out to do by 6:45 p.m. instead of the usual 10 p.m. (or, like today, where it is around 10:30 p.m. and I'm getting ready to knock off for the Sabbath. I work late on Saturday because tomorrow I get to go back to bed after the pre-sunrise prayer). Just the idea that I could go and see a movie fifteen minutes from that very moment*

and spend the subsequent two hours doing something besides working, reading the newspaper or sleeping was terrifically exciting. The movie itself was a movie, no more and no less. I do enjoy reading all the movie reviews in the National Post *in their Friday Post Movies section. Same as I can't get enough of reading about the TV show* Survivor, *even though I've never seen the show and have no desire to do so. Scott Feschuk has been conducting a round-table about the latest* Pearl Islands *incarnation and it is fascinating to read about how absorbed these intelligent people are in something that is so self-evidently excruciatingly bad and which they obviously all despise with every fibre of their being. That absolutely fascinates me. (Scott Feschuk gave up early on the round-table and then quit television reviewing entirely, so my guess is that it was worse than I thought, reading between the lines). It has also given me, indirectly, the easiest explanation of my situation in the comic-book field. I was "voted off the island" nine years ago. As soon as I heard the phrase "voted off the island," I thought, well, there you go. That's Marxist-feminism in a nutshell for you – what happens when you let petty female "shunning" become the way you run society. Purge the ranks. Get rid of the evil running dogs. We know we're good, because we voted all the evil people off the island. It only takes me eight to ten minutes to read the article, as opposed to losing one- and two-hour chunks of my life actually watching such idiocy. I'll watch the sports channel if I'm getting something to eat in a sports bar. What gets me is how they can run the same stupid commercial eight times in fifteen minutes. I'd rather go and watch the Junior "A" Rangers play at the Aud than sit through all the commercials to watch the Leafs. No joke.*

As to what I'm going to do when I'm done Cerebus. *the best answer to the question is I won't know until I get there. It's the Muslim part of me, submitting to the will of God. He's never been shy about letting me know which way I'm supposed to go next, but there's obviously little point in showing me until I'm completely done. When the fax came in from Craig at Win-Mill Productions, it was (nyuck nyuck nyuck) a godsend. Oh, right. Perfect. Gives Cerebus a new home with someone else running the show. Big flurry of faxes back and forth until I'm confident Craig and John know what they're doing. I have no idea what they're going to write on the back cover of 299 or 300, but I'm sure it'll be great. Why wouldn't it be? Craig believes in God, God gives him a nudge to fax me, badda-bing, badda-boom. It's a done deal. Like the nudge David W. Johnson got. After that, I got a package from Billy Beach, who has a house on the Adriatic Coast of Italy, inviting me to come visit him and his wife and kids. If it was anyone else, I'd have to write back and ask him to have his wife send me a letter saying that she understands my views and that it's okay with her if I visit. But this is William Beach, who has already assured me that he is the head of his house and has already stated, matter-of-factly, that he does not believe God and YHWH are separate beings and he is a devout Christian. He also said that he was pretty sure I wouldn't want to visit a complete stranger, but he believes in God, so suddenly he's writing this letter inviting me to his house on the beach and (obviously) thinking he's more than a little nuts doing it. God knows I'm going to get the letter, look through these beautiful colour brochures of the Marche Region and go, Well, I know where I'm spending MY next summer vacation. If you submit yourself to the will of God, keep your nose clean, say your prayers, pay the zakat—the stated alms—you never have to think about what you're doing next. Just do a good job on what you're doing now. It's all hooked up. The day I actually (God willing) finish my part of* Cerebus, *the first morning where I get up and I don't have to draw a page, I'm sure I'll just find myself going somewhere and where I end up will be great. Like I say, it's all hooked up. If I stay on the straight and narrow, it'll stay all hooked up.*

I really can't picture doing any more comic books. I might be wrong – might find out that it's in my blood the way everyone thinks it is and keeps telling me that it is. But, then, a decade or so ago when I was promoting self-publishing, I was pretty certain that when I finally collated all of my writings on the subject into a Cerebus Guide to Self-Publishing *that that would be "it" for self-publishing as a subject for me—if someone wanted advice, I could just hand them a copy or mail them a copy. It's been about six or seven years since we first published the* Guide *and that has turned out to be the case. I go to Bob Corby's S.P.A.C.E. convention every year and, the next time we reprint the* Guide *I plan to annotate and update it a bit. But, to say that that wasn't what everyone was expecting seven years ago is an understatement. Larry Marder had this elaborate theory that Dave Sim retreats into hermit mode and then comes back in a very public way every seven years. 1986 and 1993. It was an interesting theory, but I didn't think that was the case. I was pretty sure that I was all done "publicly" in 1995 after the Spirits stops. So far, that's been the case. The closer I've gotten to the end of* Cerebus, *the more certain I've become that I've said all that I have to say. Particularly in the last year where I have been running flat-out—finishing a marathon at a sprint pace. A lot of times the only thing that has kept me going is knowing that God wouldn't burden me with anything I wasn't able to bear and it's been a revelation (nyuck nyuck nyuck) how many times I've had an easy page to draw the same day that something unexpected was demanding my attention. I think the closest I came to a "break point" was the day that I was finally finished "Islam, My Islam" and "Why Canada Slept"—monumental amounts of work, both of them – relieved that I would never again have to compose such extended structural arguments under crushing deadline pressure, that I would finally just have to finish my damn comic book and that very morning,* The Comics Journal *with seven pages of open letters attempting to tear me a new asshole comes in the door. Well, as Gerhard once famously remarked, what are you going to do? Cry? I wasn't happy about it, but I could see God's point. Dave, you're never going to be this sharp again in composing extended structural arguments so here's two more just to cap things off: one Marxist-Palestinian and one Marxist-feminist. They've printed my answer to*

the Marxist-Palestinian but (in their long tradition of good conventional feminist evasiveness and foot-dragging) they're promised that the response to the Marxist-feminist would be "in a future issue". Seven pages of tearing me a new asshole and then one page of my response. That's Marxist fairness for you

Howard Shum asked me to pencil a Gun Fu *cover for him. I love the book, so I'm going to say yes. But I talked it over with Ger and said that I'm only going to say yes to one thing at a time and only if there's no deadline attached. Ger mentioned that Gary Millidge (who, by the way, bailed us out big time by helping us acquire enough 30% Letratone—the gray tone on Cerebus—to finish the series, now that it's only sold in England. Belated thanks, Gary!) had said that he was interested in having a few people do guest stories on* Strangehaven. *Well, I love* Strangehaven, *but as soon as I heard "story," my stomach started to clench up. Even just three or four pages. I've done 6,000 pages. I mean, come on, folks. Six. THOUSAND. Pages. Six thousand ANYTHING and I guarantee you you'll never want to see another one, whatever it is. A* Strangehaven *cover or a pin-up. Probably, probably. After I get the* Gun Fu *cover done, I would seriously consider saying yes. The hot babes of* Strangehaven *and Gary supplies the photos. I could definitely see that. But, I have no urge to draw more comic-book pages.*

I've been thinking about a Collected Essays *volume. Sometime down the road. I still have to answer two foot-high stacks of fan mail and then annotate the* Last Day *trade paperback, so that's all I'm seriously thinking about when it comes to writing. I'm pretty sure the essays are behind me. With the newly-united Conservative Party of Canada now becoming a reality, I'm getting interested in writing some letters to whomever wins the first leadership contest in the spring. I've spent twenty-six years trying to rouse interest in any number of subjects in the comic-book field and I have little or nothing to show for it but the tattered remnants of my reputation. So (I figure), as long as I'm spending all this time at the keyboard addressing myself to unresponsive brick walls, I figure I might as well try addressing myself to a few brick walls in the REAL world for a change. "Here's what I think Canadian Conservatism should be about. Here are some sound bytes that I think might blow some fist-sized holes below the Marxist Liberals' waterline." It can't be that difficult. They're Marxists, for crying out loud. Their policies are as nutty as the hollowed-out ventriloquist puppet fruitcakes who came up with them. Of course, I also plan to write to some of the Marxists, like our new MPP, John Milloy, who I chatted with at the all-candidates meetings and who (as it turns out) has just been appointed Premier Dalton McGuintey's parliamentary assistant on intergovernmental affairs. So, I figure that's as good a place to start as any for my recommendations on restructuring Canada's Senate. There are few mornings that go by that I don't find something in the* National Post *that I want to write a withering retort to now that the Asper family has been making it all squishy around the edges. I also plan to go to Kitchener City Council meetings and find out where the bodies are buried in town here. If there are any councilthingys with enough brain power to blow up a paper bag and things like that.*

Obviously, I can't run for anything myself. I'm not a feminist. I'm openly anti-feminism. But while I'm waiting to be arrested on some trumped-up Marxist-feminist "hate literature" charge, I figure I might as well stick my nose in and find out what's what.

See, Sergeant, to me, that's how things used to be. A young fellow would start out in his chosen field, work hard for twenty or thirty years until he'd made his fortune, or, at least, established himself so he had a steady income and then he devoted himself to public service because having a steady income and a nest-egg gave him the most valuable commodity around, time to invest in those things that will do some good, but don't pay the rent. Time to read some jargon-stuffed city council report and figure out where tax money is being pissed away locally: who's goring whose ox and who's greasing whose wheels. I am 100% behind the war on terrorism, but it seems to me that terrorism is just the tip of the iceberg. The big problem is Marxism. Marxist-feminism, to me, is at least as great a threat to our freedom as is Marxist-Islam (which, I think, is the more accurate way to describe fundamentalist Islam or militant Islam or terrorist Islam. If they're murdering civilians, read their literature and five will get you twenty their political philosophy has been seasoned with Das Kapital*). I think both of them have to be fought tooth-and-nail every inch of the way. I realize everyone thinks I'm crazy when I say that but, by way of example, I read that the new constitution in Afghanistan is going to make it mandatory that the government be composed 40% of women. Marxist-feminism sprouts from the ashes of Marxist-Islam. Quotas. If you determine the gender of your elected officials before the election, that isn't democracy, that's communism. This is what happens when the United Nations sneaks in the back door behind the U.S. military. No wonder Kofi Annan was so gob-smacked by the attack on UN headquarters in Iraq. Comrade! What are you doing? We're on your side! I'm philosophical about the fact that few others see the threat posed by Marxist-feminism. I figure as the U.S. and its allies dismantle Marxist-Islam in the Middle East, Marxist-feminism will begin to stand out in such sharp relief that it's going to have a lot of trouble keeping its undercover marching band on the road. I read a recounted conversation between a U.S. military man and an Iraqi (who mentioned that he had a three-year-old daughter). "Hey," said the American soldier, "I have a three-year old daughter, too," adding (somewhat sheepishly), "She's kind of bossy." To which the Iraqi immediately responded, "You're spoiling her." As much as America has to teach the Muslims of the Middle East (and there's no question in my mind that America has a great deal to teach the Muslims of the Middle East), I think that learning can prove to be a valuable two-way street (so long as America's Fifth Column, the Marxist-feminist Democrats can be beaten at the polls for a decade or two. If Howard Dean and Hillary Clinton are the best they can do, a decade should be no problemo). I think America—Ronald Reagan's "shining city on the hill"—can teach*

Muslims about what they've never had and what they might one day have if they embrace liberty and democracy. But I think the Muslims can teach North Americans about what we've lost and what we might one day recover "You're spoiling her." Not said in the North American sense· "Oh, isn't that cute and endearing that a three-year-old girl is bossing her Daddy around!" But, rather, in the masculine sense The paternal sense The God-fearing sense If a three-year-old is "bossy" you're failing her as a father. You're spoiling her. As in the difference between fresh fruit and spoiled fruit. Your daughter is "going bad" turning rotten. You better do something about it—do something about it on a daily basis or your daughter will turn out useless, no-good and rotten to the core. Like Paris Hilton if the descriptions of The Simple Life *are anything to go by. To a nation of God-fearing fathers such as you will find in Iraq or any other Muslim country, democracy and freedom and all the vice-riddled crap that we North Americans have found goes hand-in-glove with them are going to be tough enough selling jobs. If you try to couple that with mandating 40% representation by useless and rotten-to-the-core harridans (what other sort of Islamic woman would be interested?), I think I'm safe in saying that it will prove to be a non-starter, no matter how long the Marxist-feminist Democrats can be kept from undermining your national will and determination to see the job through in Iraq.*

On the recommended reading-list front, I'm always going to fall back on Norman Mailer's The Armies of the Night. *Particularly for a military man like yourself, it's a good close-up examination of a whole spectrum of ethical decision-making. Mailer, of course, was a World War II veteran but also historically a leftist (who finally settled on the ambiguity of designating himself as a "left conservative"). The book documents the March on the Pentagon in 1967 but—at the level it has always held the greatest appeal for me—is also the best examination of the processes of individual ethical decision-making· both over the long term and "on the run" Particularly relevant when Mailer knowingly sets out to get himself arrested for transgressing the cordon around the Pentagon. This played no small part in my own decision to force the Marxist-feminists to arrest me on a trumped-up hate literature charge or -somewhere up ahead to have to face what I've been "reading into the historical record" since issue 186 Mailer documents his own decision-making and frankly admits where it is that he took a step down from making the right next ethical choice—and then has the courage to follow those who didn't take a step down (i.e. those who didn't plead guilty in exchange for promising to stay away from the Pentagon for x amount of time) to their ultimate fate in the U.S. judicial system.*

Well, I've rambled on for a little while here. I have to tell you that I consider it a signal honour to have a letter from a genuine member of the U.S. military, a genuine veteran of the liberation of Iraq to "close out the show". In a like fashion, even though I, myself, am a useless old man, I consider the fact that I played a significant role (as both were kind enough to acknowledge) in two Cerebus *readers choosing to "do their part" in the war on terrorism as my most immediate and greatest accomplishment as I enter my retirement Claude Flowers of Washington state has signed up for the Reserves and Shawn O'Hern of Alabama has joined the navy. I don't often get choked up (as you all well know), but I sure did when Shawn told me over the phone about his enlistment, particularly when he mentioned that the pledge he took closes with the words, ".. so help me, God" and how significant that was to him. You didn't mention whether you're a God-fearing man yourself, but let me just thank you for your contribution to freedom and democracy, putting your life on the line, there in the cradle of civilization, Ur of the Chaldees, the land of Abraham's nativity Even if the Marxist-feminist Democrats manage to upset the applecart before the real work is done, this fateful day in human history which has brought the two lines of succession from the patriarch Abraham the Muslims through Ishmael and the Judeo-Christians through Isaac—into proximity, first on the battlefield and now at the conference table will, I am reasonably certain, mark the twenty-first century as the most significant in a thousand years. With God's help and God's guidance, and with the good will of men here on earth American men, almost exclusively at the moment—it is a thing devoutly to be wished that all the Marxist-feminists Democrats will be able to accomplish is a temporary foot-dragging and evasive impediment. The work you assisted in beginning, Sergeant Moore, will, in the fullness of time, be accomplished. Inshallah. God willing.*

I wish I had some encouraging words for you from north of the 49th parallel some last indication of bright promise that Canada shows some evidence of growing up (or, at point of greatest reduction, waking up) and catching up to the United States in the war on terrorism. Alas, our new Marxist-feminist Prime Minister, Paul Martin, has just reappointed the ever-squishy Bill Graham as Foreign Affairs minister (although it must be admitted that the minister's first few announcements were a little less squishy than usual) and has appointed Scott Brison, as parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister on Canada-U.S. relations On the bright side, Mr Brison once worked on Wall Street and is a recent defector from the Conservative Party On the not-so-bright side, he's openly gay. I wince just picturing the look on Donald Rumsfeld's face As John F. Kennedy said to Nikita Krushchev, "It's going to be a long, cold winter."

So, I'll just have to renew—for the last time in print and so much at variance with the national delusion which surrounds me—my personal thanks to the American military and the American people who are going it alone in the war on terrorism and bearing up under the exponentially greater weight of global responsibility with the phenomenal grace, determination and generosity—both material and spiritual so characteristic of you as a people.

May God bless America. As He always has. And, inshallah, as He always will.

Wilf Jenkins, Q.C.

Wilf Jenkins, Q.C. has been Aardvark-Vanaheim's corporate lawyer and Dave Sim's personal attorney since the early 1980's. The following letter was sent to him, dated 28 November 2003

Dear Wilf

Thanks for your phone message yesterday regarding the last few items that need to be covered before Ger and I (at long last!) have a finished Shareholder Agreement, formalizing our decade-long practice of dividing the assets of the company 60-40 and making arrangements for the disposition of the company's assets after we are both dead. I am holding you to your promise to "bake a cake" if we ever get this thing done.

Sorry to drag you out "on stage" here (as it were). This peculiar two-column format for a business letter is attributable to the fact that (apart from "Dave's Prayer" on the inside back cover) this, God willing, will be the last thing printed in the last issue of *Cerebus*. We've already accomplished the relatively easy part of formalizing that *Cerebus*, as an intellectual property, will enter the public domain at the passing from this mortal coil of Ger and myself and that Preney Print & Litho will be the custodians of the negatives for the entire *Cerebus* storyline, copies of which they will provide to any publisher interested in printing his or her own edition of any of the separate trade paperbacks or the 6,000 page story in toto. From what I understand from a recent conversation with Kim Preney this will probably only be an interim necessity: the technology is advancing so fast that soon it will be possible to put the entire storyline on disk, with sufficient clarity to be able to be printed without the negatives. Computer people are inveterate optimists, though, and tend to overestimate dramatically what qualifies as "clarity" long before their technology has reached that point. So, the aforementioned "interim" might constitute a few months or it could be a matter that computer people will still be ironing out a few bugs at the point where Ger and I will no longer be able to so much as play a passable game of shuffleboard. Either way, the negatives are housed at Preney and I'm sure we should be able to get Kim, Dick and John to agree to a custodial role both for now and in the future. Since they have been the loyal printers of *Cerebus* since issue 26, hopefully that will give them a "leg up" as the printers of choice for anyone wanting to publish their own *Cerebus* collection and further that Preney will remain a family business as Preney Kids: The Next Generation have begun to learn the trade.

That leaves only the disposition of the Cerebus Archive: the contents of the house, the artwork and all of Aardvark-Vanaheim's and Ger's and my business and personal files and correspondence. As I have indicated to you, I would like this to be offered (in descending order of preference) to Wilfred Laurier University, the City of Kitchener, the Province of Ontario or the National Archives of Canada. You indicated in your phone message that we should attempt to make some contact with Wilfred Laurier University (and the "fall-back" entities) to determine if such a donation would be accepted. And therein lies a central problem. None of those entities, I am quite certain, would be interested. There is a remote possibility that (coupled with Peter Birkemoe's letter establishing the book value of the Cerebus artwork) simple greed might be used to "bait the hook" — you get the artwork if you agree to take and preserve all the rest of this crap that you aren't interested in—but, even then, it would be a long shot. As it stands at the moment, I am (or would/will be) universally viewed as a misogynist (rather than an anti-feminist) and a pariah in my country, in my province and in my city with the result that the *Cerebus* storyline and the Archive attached to it are perceived to have about as much artistic value as, say, a scale model of Buckingham Palace built, over the course of twenty-six years and three months, out of toothpicks. A peculiar, eccentric and bizarre enterprise perpetrated by a harmless old coot but, in my case, with the veneer of malignancy and evil attached to it. If Ger and I were to die tomorrow and if our legacy was to be entrusted into the hands of the above-mentioned entities, my honest assessment is that they would simply use it all for landfill.

The only way that I can see of avoiding this fate is to do the one thing that I have scrupulously avoided over the last two-and-a-half decades—relying on other people (I remember you quoting the line from *I, Claudius* to me "Trust no one."—sometime back in the 80s. It was, at the time, and remains, to this day, the single most useful piece of advice I ever received). Thus, by my usual long-winded route, we arrive at the reason for this unprecedented public airing of one of our attorney-client communications.

It will be up to the *Cerebus* readership to explain to Wilfred Laurier University why it is important that *Cerebus* and all of its attendant artwork and paperwork should be preserved and not thrown into so many large dumpsters. It is (I'm sure you'll agree) an almost insurmountable task, compounded by the fact that most of my audience consists today, as it always has, of fence-sitting liberals most, if not all, of whom I am reasonably certain will be perfectly content to sit on whatever fence is nearby and watch the entirety of the now-completed *Cerebus* project go merrily down the toilet, as they have been content on several occasions to allow me to be publicly vilified on the Internet without a word of demurral on their part. When it is time to stand up and be counted, in my experience, you can always rely on liberals to sit down and waffle.

Perhaps I'm mistaken. It would be nice to think that for some of my readers it would be worth the time and trouble to compose a letter addressed to

The Cerebus Archive
Box 1674 Station C
Kitchener, Ontario
Canada N2G 4R2

"To Whom It May Concern:" and, in a few paragraphs or a page or two, explain why it is that they think that all of the paper attached to the Cerebus project should be preserved for future generations and why the Cerebus Archive would be an asset for a prominent research facility like Wilfred Laurier University. You and I both know that in a (let us call a spade a spade) largely parochial backwater like Kitchener-Waterloo—however much its parochial denizens noisily disparage Americans and Brits and Europeans— letters from those same Americans, Brits and Europeans, on professional letterheads espousing the view that a domestically-produced Kitchener-Waterloo creative work has (be still their beating hearts) "world class" merit would go a long way towards overcoming their insular tangential self-loathing. Of course, that requires overcoming another form of insular self-loathing—the fact that most Americans, Brits and Europeans reading these words are very apt to say, "Well, but, who am I? Why would anyone listen to what I have to say?"

Excuse me a moment, Wilf, while I address them directly. Are you a lawyer? A doctor? An actor with a theatre company? Most particularly, a university professor or executive? A publisher? A published writer? An executive of any kind? Do you have your own letterhead? "Well, yes, but I'm not in New York or Paris or London. I'm in [fill-in-the-blank] Kansas or [fill-in-the-blank] Belgium or [fill-in-the-blank] in the Midlands." The simple fact is, that wherever you are, to people in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, your city, province and country have to be at least as important—and (more significantly) twice as exotic—as Waterloo, Ontario and Canada.

This part—trying to effect a "tipping point" between the Archive being accepted or being rejected—is completely out of my control. Obviously, one thing that I can't do is to vouch for my own work. If—three months from now, five years from now, twenty years from now—the time comes for the Cerebus Archive to be offered to Wilfred Laurier University and the total number of "To Whom It May Concern" letterhead documents supporting the donation are two: one from a dentist in Martinique and one from a fanzine publisher in Des Moines then I think it entirely reasonable to suppose that the final fate of Cerebus will be landfill or the dumpster. To those concerned about their privacy, I can assure you that all of the letters will be kept confidential and provided only to whatever committee, at whatever time, decides whether or not to accept the donation of the Cerebus Archive. If anyone deems it necessary, they can just write "please forward unopened" on the envelope of their Cerebus Archive letter and I will forward them to you, Wilf, in that condition and the first that they will be read is by the committee in question somewhere in the distant or not-too-distant future.

Will it work? I have no idea. What about you, Wilf? If you weren't in the prejudicial position of being my lawyer, would you write a letter supporting the view that *Cerebus* should be preserved as a cultural and creative artefact? Or would you mean to, but somehow never get around to it?

You remember the *Supernatural Law* comic book that I sent you, where Batton did the parody of Cerebus? I can't think of two people as far apart on the political spectrum as Batton and myself, but I would hope—if I had read that Batton needed a comparable letter for a comparable reason and that I read about it in his letters page—that I would make it a priority to sit down and write such a letter, knowing that a letter that started "Speaking as the co-creator of the comic-book medium's longest sustained creative work, *Cerebus*, a six-thousand-page graphic novel, I firmly believe that an archive of material associated with Batton Lash's *Supernatural Law* (formerly *Wolff & Byrd Counsellors of the Macabre*) is very much worth preserving for the benefit of future generations. If I can be of any further assistance, please contact me at the number below." By itself? Probably wouldn't do much. But my letter would be from Canada which would instantly translate into "international success" to anyone reading it in Batton's adopted home town of San Diego. And if there were a dozen or two dozen other letters accompanying it—from various professionals in various cities around the world—I think it might very much tip the balance for anyone otherwise inclined to see Batton's work as junk just because it's a comic book and not a novel or a movie or whatever.

In a real sense, this is the point where Cerebus passes from my hands into the hands of its readership and leaves it up to them as to whether it has a future beyond my lifetime or not. Naturally, I'll accept whatever verdict the readers, individually and collectively, choose to pass (what else can I do?) and trust, as I always do, that the ultimate fate of my work, as with everything else, rests with God.

I'll forward any Cerebus Archive letters that come in for you to keep with the Shareholder Agreement and my will. Actually, now that I think of it, if the weather's nice I'll probably walk over with them. As a retiree, I should have some time on my hands. After Ger and I are dead—perhaps even after you're dead, Wilf—it will remain to be seen if the *Cerebus* audience has made a persuasive enough case to Wilfred Laurier University to accept that a 6,000-page graphic novel has intrinsic historical merit and that its supporting documents are worth preserving for future generations.

And I was just kidding about the cake. I can't even imagine what that would cost in a lawyer's hourly billing rates.

I remain, sincerely, your client

Dave Sim

PS. Gerhard's interest in all this peaked about five years ago, so I don't think there'll be any necessity to have any further three-way meetings. I'll keep him posted on our discussions and, hopefully, after the book is done (17 pages to go) we'll be able to just sign the Shareholder Agreement and get on with what remains of our lives.

A Prayer

In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful:
There is no God but God
& Muhammad is His last messenger and seal of prophets.
Almighty God
One God having One Name, One Face and One Aspect which is God:
Glory to God in the Highest, Glory to God Most High
God Who is the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful.
Great is God and there is no other god but He.

Almighty God, I thank You for having revealed Yourself to men.
I thank You for Your Presence in the world and Your presence in my life
through Your Living Word, preserved for all time within Your Sacred Scriptures;
Your Living Word which is like unto a shining beacon, illuminating the path You have made straight before me.

Almighty God, I thank You for the book of Genesis,
I thank You for the book of Exodus,
I thank You for the book of Leviticus,
I thank You for the book of Numbers,
I thank You for the book of Deuteronomy.
I thank You for these books and revelations which
You imparted to Your great prophet, Moshe
Peace be upon him.

I thank You for the book of Joshua,
I thank You for the book of Judges,
I thank You for the book of Samuel,
I thank You for the book of Kings,
I thank You for the book of Isaiah,
I thank You for the book of Jeremiah,
I thank You for the book of Ezekiel,
I thank You for the book of Hosea,
I thank You for the book of Joel,
I thank You for the book of Amos,
I thank You for the book of Obadiah,
I thank You for the book of Jonah,
I thank You for the book of Micah,
I thank You for the book of Nahum,
I thank You for the book of Habakkuk,
I thank You for the book of Zephaniah,
I thank You for the book of Haggai,
I thank You for the book of Zechariah,
And I thank You for the book of Malachi.

I thank You for the testimony and the records of these prophets and messengers to
Your Chosen People,
Israel.
Peace be upon them.

I thank You for the Gospel according to Matthew,
I thank You for the Gospel according to Mark,
I thank You for the Gospel according to Luke,
I thank You for the Gospel according to John.
Peace be upon them

I thank You for the testimonies and the records
of Jesus, the Lamb of God,
Peace be upon him.

I thank You for the Acts of the Apostles,
I thank You for the Epistles of Paul,
I thank You for the testimony of the disciples,
I thank You for the Revelation of John.
Peace be upon them.

And I thank you for your glorious Koran.

Almighty God, after the instruction of Your last messenger and seal of prophets,
Muhammad, peace be upon him,
who counselled that a man must submit himself
to the Will of God, wilfully and peacefully, I renew my vow (*this morning*) that I do so: that I submit myself to You and I submit myself to Your Will. If it be Your Will, please grant that I might be brought to the fulfillment which You intended for me from before my birth.

Glory to God in the highest, Glory to God Most High, God who is the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, Great is God and there is no other God but He. God Who created all the worlds and all the heavens, God Who is the only Source of salvation, God who is the only Hope of redemption, God Who is the only good, God Who is my only sanctuary, God Who is my only safe harbour from the storm. Glory to God in the highest, glory to God most high,
In excelsis Deo.

Almighty God, I thank You for allowing me to be born in Canada in the last half of the twentieth century: pampered, coddled, insulated, sheltered and protected
from so much of the world's genuine hardship & pain, misery & strife, famine & poverty, disease & despair, hunger & need, want & dread, fear & violence, suppression & oppression which are the yoke & the burden under which so much of the world's population yet labours.

Though these sufferings are of the dust of this earth—from dust they came and to dust they will return—still I know that I have been spared them, only by Your Grace and by Your Mercy, and I am profoundly grateful to You for that.

May God's Will be done *in* the earth, and *on* the earth, as it is in all the worlds and all the heavens.

Glory to God in the Highest, Glory to God Most High. God who is the Most Gracious and Most Merciful. Great is God and there is no other god but He. God Who created all the worlds and all the heavens, God Who is the only Source of salvation, God who is the only Hope of redemption, God who is the only good, God who is my only sanctuary, God who is my only safe harbour from the storm. Glory to God in the highest, Glory to God most High,
In excelsis Deo.

Almighty God, if I am worthy of forgiveness in Your Eyes, I ask forgiveness of my many sins, transgressions, iniquities and vanities which are abominations before your Eternal Laws, Morals and Ethics. If I am worthy of forgiveness in Your Eyes, I ask forgiveness of all my sins of commission and of omission: those sins which I have committed and which I commit, out of wilfulness, out of ignorance, out of spite, out of misery, out of self-absorption, out of self-pity, out of self-destructiveness or out of misunderstanding or misconstruing Your Living Word.

Almighty God, I accept all consequences and repercussions of my own choices, decisions, self-imposed inadequacies, actions, deeds, words and works. For God is the Sure Judge over all the earth and all the worlds and all the heavens, slow to anger, measured and temperate in Your Judgements, sparing and merciful in Your chastisements.

Glory to God in the highest, Glory to God most High, God who is the most gracious and he most merciful, Great is God and there is no other god but He. God who created all the worlds and all the heavens. God who is the only Source of salvation, God who is the only Hope of redemption. God who is the only good. God who is my only sanctuary. God who is my only safe harbour from the storm. Glory to God in the highest, glory to God most high.
In excelsis Deo.

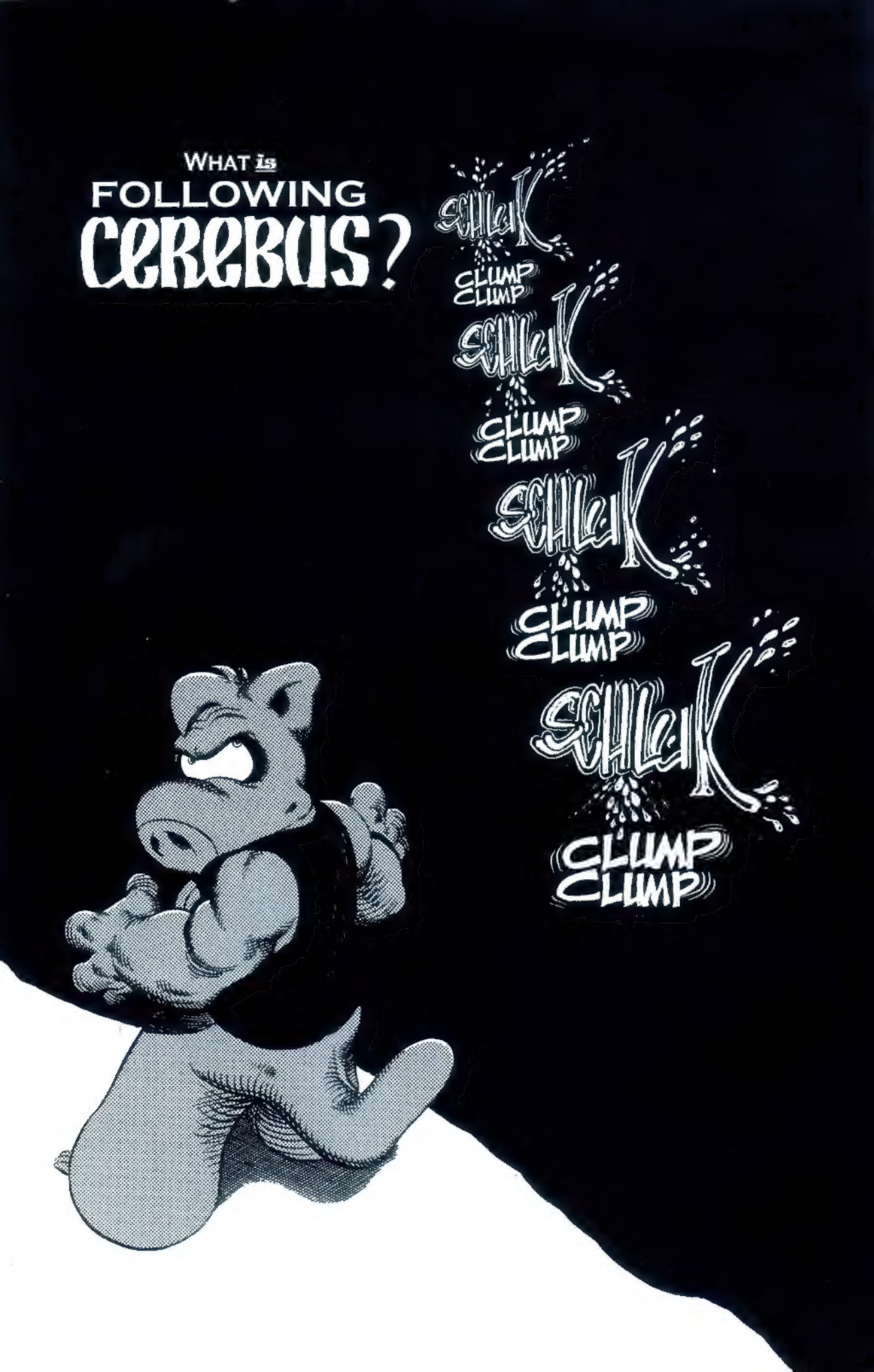
Almighty God, I commend into Your Care and Your Custody, my soul, my mind and my heart, knowing as I do so that free will is God's greatest gift to man. And while I entrust myself only to You and while I trust only You, still I know that there are choices and decisions which lie before me in my life which are mine alone to make. If it be Your Will, please grant that those choices and decisions might be informed by the common sense, the good judgement and what wisdom You have seen fit to bestow upon me, by Your Grace and by Your Mercy.

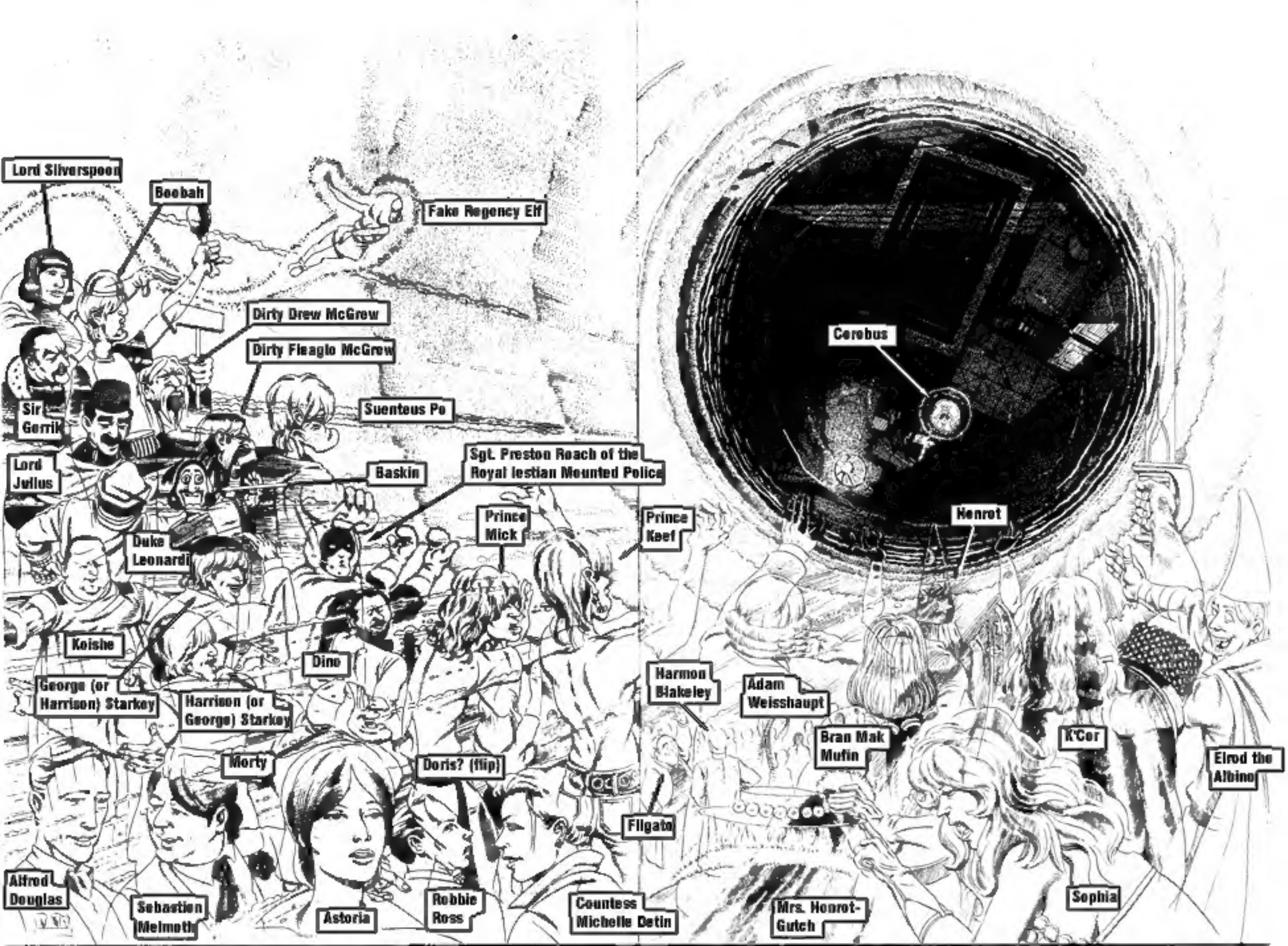
Glory to God in the Highest, Glory to God Most High. God who is the Most Gracious and Most Merciful. Great is God and there is no other god but He. God who created all the worlds and all the heavens, God Who is the only source of salvation, God who is the only hope of redemption, God who is the only good, God who is my only sanctuary, God who is my only safe harbour from the storm. Glory to God in the highest, Glory to God most High
In excelsis Deo

Almighty God, I also renew my vow (*this morning*) that I will never again marry and I will never again cohabit with a woman. I vow further to exercise all caution, all restraint, all common sense, all good judgement and what wisdom You have seen fit to bestow upon me, by Your Grace and by Your Mercy and to exercise all these to the utmost in all of my dealings with womankind.

Glory to God in the Highest, Glory to God most High, God who is the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful. Great is God and there is no other God but He. God who created all the worlds and all the heavens. God who is the only Source of salvation, God who is the only Hope of redemption, God who is the only good, God who is my only sanctuary, God who is my only safe harbour from the storm. Glory to God in the highest, Glory to God most high,
In excelsis Deo.

Amen.


WHAT is
FOLLOWING
CEREBUS?
SCHLAK
CLUMP CLUMP
SCHLAK
CLUMP CLUMP
SCHLAK
CLUMP CLUMP
SCHLAK
CLUMP CLUMP


Lord Silverspoon
Boobah
Fake Regency Elf
Dirty Drew McGrew
Dirty Fleagle McGrew
Suenteus Po
Sir Gerrik
Lord Julius
Baskin
Sgt. Preston Roach of the Royal Iestian Mounted Police
Duke Leonardi
Prince Mick
Prince Keef
Koishe
George (or Harrison) Starkey
Harrison (or George) Starkey
Dino
Morty
Doris? (flip)
Fligate
Alfred Douglas
Sebastian Melmoth
Astoria
Robbie Ross
Countess Michelle Detin
Cerebus
Henrot
Harmon Blakeley
Adam Weisshaupt
Bran Mak Mufin
K'Cor
Elrod the Albino
Mrs. Henrot-Gutch
Sophia